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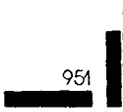

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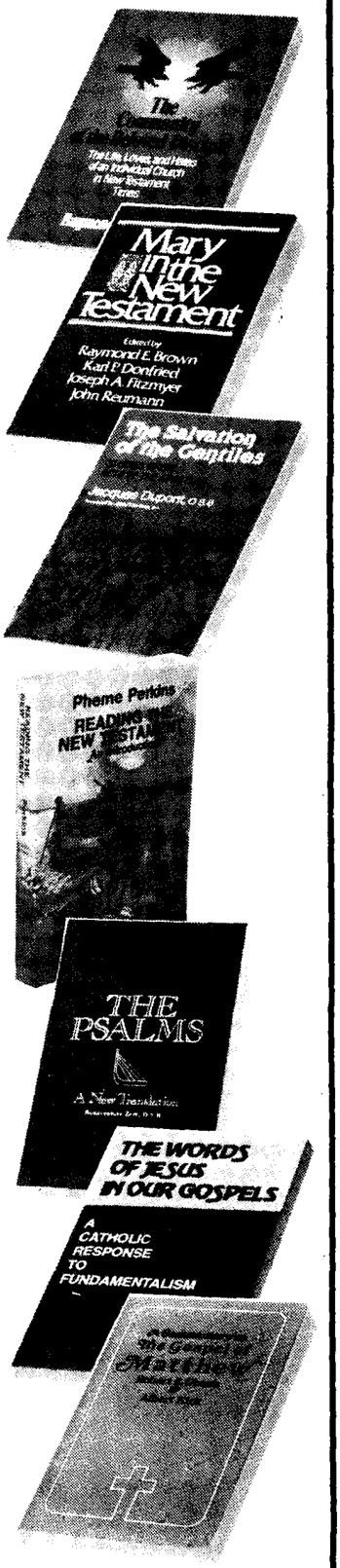

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WHO'S DISTURBING THE FAITHFUL?

ONCE AGAIN the institutional church and its intellectuals are on a collision course. It is an ironic moment for such a conflict. Theological thought and argument, as the critic George Steiner insisted a year ago, is in the midst of a "striking renaissance." At no time during the last century and a half, in this country at least, has Catholic theology exhibited more health. Not long ago, it seemed that the emergence of works like Hans Küng's *On Being a Christian* and Edward Schillebeeckx's *Jesus, An Experiment in Christology* signaled a new period of synthesis and reappropriation following a largely critical phase of post-Vatican II theologizing. Yet precisely these works and these authors are today found at the center of controversy in Rome.

The current conflict is unnecessary and destructive. It is, however, understandable. Karl Rahner has recently described the change of viewpoint in certain aspects of Catholic theology as "Copernican"—a shift in worldview as radical as the sun and the earth's trading places in the cosmos. On another occasion he compared the opening up of theological thought after Vatican II to the confrontation between early Christianity and Greek thought in the church's first centuries. There will always be those who prefer to evade such intellectual challenges altogether. Those who reject evasion, however, should not pretend that the alternative will be some easy progression to always profounder expressions of Christian faith. There will be false starts as well as fruitful speculation, superficial enthusiasms as well as penetrating insights. Everything will be complicated by the vigilant presence of the mass media and the constant pressure to force exploratory study into hard and unnuanced conclusions, the more startling the better.

Under these circumstances, one can sympathize with the concern of many that some recent theological trends might be eroding the substance of the faith. One can heartily affirm the necessity for the church to have some practical means of scrutinizing new formulations, a task in which special responsibility falls on the bishops and the papacy. This is more than a Roman Catholic internal issue, it is more than an ecumenical issue: in a world in which Authority appears either to freeze into authoritarianism or dissolve into anarchic individualism, the witness given by humane, responsible procedures for maintaining Catholic identity and belief through an inevitably turbulent period of theological change would be considerable.

What appears to be happening now in Rome is just the opposite. Authority is being discredited, decent procedures flouted, the possibility of responsible, self-critical theological exploration diminished. Yes, Hans Küng is a *provocateur*: in responding to the criticism published in these pages of his infallibility book, Küng readily admitted to trying to stir Rome with a polemical tone. On the other hand, Küng's provocativeness helped build support for reform during Vatican II, and both his outspokenness and his recent apologetics have been the source of renewed faith

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for many. The "disturbance of the faithful" that is being produced by Rome's treatment of Küng is greater by far than any consequent upon his theory of "indefectibility"—a theory that could well have been left to the theological debates where it had far more formidable critics than it does in Rome.

None of these cases—Pohier, Küng, Schillebeeckx, the proceedings against Charles Curran—is meant to limit the "legitimate and necessary freedom of research for theologians." Or so a Vatican authority assures us. The problem is that the Vatican's Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith is inclined to use as the criterion of legitimacy the concealed presuppositions of that theology devised by the theologians of the Roman School in the second half of the nineteenth century. Independent of the feudal judicial procedures involved, an indicted theologian may well suspect the outcome is rigged in advance by the unacknowledged theological preferences of the judges. Herein lies the ideological dispute, and the cultural gap, between Rome and northern European and American theologians.

Borrowed from Joseph de Maistre's ideal of absolute sovereignty as a model for church organization and infallibility, the theology of the Roman School breaks with patristic and medieval theology which had distributed the teaching function among bishops *and* doctors of theology. Instead, it reserves the teaching function exclusively to the pope and bishops. In a Platonic mode, it views revelation as encapsulated in the ahistorical, objective formulations of a tradition which it is the duty of bishops to proclaim, and the obligation of the faithful to accept. Rather than viewing the functions of theologians and the episcopacy as complementary, both subordinate to the Word of God, it tends to reduce bishops to papal yes-men and theologians to party-line ideologists. It's as if the pope and his obedient legates, the bishops, were the sole surviving Christians, alone possessing insight into the meaning of Christian truth. From this perspective, Christ's yoke shouldered by church authorities is bound to be burdensome, and any theologian who criticizes official teaching must be guilty of the aberration of substituting "private opinion" for episcopal authority. No doubt few would subscribe now to this crude form of Roman School theology, but in the buzz words of the decree removing Küng's canonical mission as "Catholic" the tenor of this perspective is distinctly visible. So is the bitterness of official duties.

The conflict here was ingredient from the first in the texts of Vatican II. Indeed, in the Constitution on the Church *(Lumen Gentium)*, two vastly different mind-sets were simply placed side by side without any attempt at synthesis. The one reflects the "perfect society," strictly hierarchical, overtly juridical, concerned with obligations upon and control of an essentially passive laity. The other images an imperfect society, a pilgrim people whose process of realizing the truth of the Gospel it is the function of authorities to serve dialogically, collegially. Setting these two conceptions side by side was an act of honesty, but the inner conflict there was bound to surface. In the present instance, we think the problem has arisen, and will worsen if nothing is done about it, because the collegial principle has not been adequately extended and implemented with respect to theologians.

Most knowledgeable observers concede that the International Theological Commission, set up to continue the faithful dialogue of Vatican II, has been wholly inadequate. If current tensions are not to mean an incalculable loss to the intellectual vitality of the entire church, regularized channels of consultation on the broadest possible scale must be set up between Rome and the various national societies and faculties of theology. Institutionalization of this kind might do three things: 1) It might insure that papal and congregational statements on a broad range of doctrinal and moral issues contained the best thinking currently available in the church. 2) It would provide the appropriate forums in which to discriminate between legitimate and illegitimate interpretations of the faith in modern and cross-cultural idioms. 3) In providing a mechanism for reconciliation among diverse cultural and intellectual viewpoints, it might lighten the burdens of exercising authority. In short, the institutionalization of a broad-based dialogue between the episcopacy and the theological community provides the proper forum for dealing creatively with questionable theological developments. Moreover, a permanent Vatican arena for peer evaluation of questionable theological positions might educate the whole church and lend credibility to any possible negative judgment authorities might finally reach.

Looking ahead, however, the long-promised revision of the Code of Canon Law offers little indication that due process will be embodied in the new law. On the contrary, as a study of the provisional schema appearing in the current issue of *Theological Studies* points out, the text thus far exhibits a general tendency to canonize present discipline and to legislate answers to widely controverted theological, pastoral, and canonical questions. Regarding the teaching mission of theologians, the emphasis falls on hierarchical control, canonical mission, prior censorship, and penalties for those who question the Holy See or the local ordinary. Again, we are brought to the vicious circle of a practice instilled by a defensive Roman School theology: official pronouncements are invariably criticized because they ignore broad consultation with the best thinking in the church, and this criticism is taken as "contempt" for the magisterium, or heresy that is to be silenced. In an age of mass publishing and instant communication, does anyone really believe that such methods will achieve their purpose of protecting seminarians or the populace from "disturbance"? The policy is manifestly futile.

A positive alternative requires imagination and faith. Imagination to conceive and implement structural changes in church administration that will allow something akin to that fertile communication among bishops, theologians, curial officials, and non-Catholic observers which occurred at Vatican II to become an ongoing feature of the church's teaching and learning process. And faith, trust in the critical process of the intellectual community that would so willingly serve the truth that Rome wishes to proclaim to the world. As matters stand now, however, Rome gives the appearance of fearing more than promoting the quest for truth.

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KUNG, SCHILLEBEECKX, & TRUE OBEDIENCE

The responsibility of theologians

BERNARD J. COOKE

VATICAN II has left us a number of guidelines, none clearer than that all members of the church bear responsibility for the well-being of the Christian community—for *we* are the church. The day when responsibility for the peace and life of the church could be shunted off onto church officials is long over—it should never have been.

Responsibilities are, of course diverse, depending on the situation of each Christian. Theologians, for instance, have the particular task of studying the nature and meaning of Christianity, in order to make ever more accurate the church's understanding of its faith. Theologians are meant to explore in depth God's revelation in Jesus; they should guide the church to new insights into the traditional beliefs of Christianity, so that the church's understanding (especially of Christ) can provide direction for humanity's evolving consciousness—so that the church can truly be a light to the world.

Yet, one of the paradoxes of the Roman Catholic church in the twentieth century is the fact that when theologians have tried to fulfill this God-given ministry within the church, they have repeatedly been criticized and even condemned by the highest levels of church authority. What is going on now—the Vatican judgment of Schillebeeckx and Küng and a number of U.S. moral theologians—is but the latest instance of this recurrent pattern. Understandably, many Catholics (and others also) are confused: a decade or two ago they saw scholars like Murray, de Lubac, Congar, Rahner, Teilhard—to say nothing of a wide range of Catholic biblical scholars—officially silenced or removed from teaching, shortly thereafter to become the guiding intellectual influence at Vatican II. Now, after finding direction in the post-conciliar years from theologians such as Schillebeeckx, they read the charges made against "the new theology" (for example, against Schillebeeckx's christology) and are uncertain what is considered dangerous or misleading.

What exactly is going on? Have progressive theologians really gone too far and drifted into heresy? Or is this a fearful pulling back of the papacy from the openness promised by Vatican II, an attempt to use power to suppress thought? It might be safer for Catholic theologians to say nothing at the present moment, to let the "heresy trials" being carried on by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith proceed unchallenged. But to do this would be irresponsible; much too much is at stake for theologians (or for that matter, any other group in the church) to do other than speak the truth with love for the Christian people who are the church.

What is happening in the intellectual life of the church is frightening, if one does not understand it: a basic shift is occurring in human consciousness in general and therefore in Christians' understanding of their faith. A number of the most perceptive thinkers in the church—for example, Karl Rahner in the most recent issue of *Theological Studies*—have indicated that a new era of theological reflection (and resultantly of Christian understanding) is well under way, theological reflection that will replace but not negate the viewpoint of the past eighteen hundred years or so. There is no turning the clock backward, no way to stop the future from happening. Nor should Christianity wish to do so; its view of human history is characteristically eschatological, i.e., it sees history as progressing under divine guidance toward a goal that will surpass our present situation of human existing.

But why does this present-day development in human consciousness seem to some in the church to be such a grave threat? Well, for one thing, modern thought is characteristically *critical*. In all fields of knowledge scholars ask: how *certain* are we of what we know? how *exact* is our understanding of the world, even of ourselves—to say nothing of our understanding of God? While in some cases such questioning can be cynically sceptical and almost totally negative, the main stream of modern critical thought is honest search for truth that recognizes the many limitations of human thinking. It is a humble admission of human inability to know even created

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reality comprehensively; it is an attempt systematically to recognize and overcome error.

FOR ALMOST a century this critical approach to knowledge has had its impact on Catholic theology; theologians can tolerate error and inadequate understandings no more than scholars in other fields. Actually, the ultimate importance of the knowledge with which they are dealing demands of them even greater care. One indispensable task they have, as in any field of careful research, is to evaluate the adequacy of understandings arrived at in earlier periods of human history.

Increasingly such critical study has moved toward the very center of Christian faith: to Jesus as the Christ. Thus, Catholic theologians are attempting to answer yet more clearly and deeply the question first posed by Jesus himself, the question with which Christian faith must always be concerned: "Who do you say that I am?"

For centuries, we had been saying many things about Jesus—that he was the Son of God, the second person of the Trinity, true God and true man, the savior of the human race. Modern theology accepts such statements as intrinsic to Christian tradition; but what do such statements mean? Given the immense difficulties human thought faces when it attempts to think about the divine, what meaning is contained in a term such as "the Son of God"? Or in "Incarnation"? After one has repeated the words of John's prologue, "and the Word was made flesh," how does one spell out accurately the meaning of such an incredible statement?

To profess puzzlement at such basic belief statements about Jesus can mean (and certainly for the vast majority of Catholic theologians does mean) that one recognizes the limitations of any such statements; it does not mean that one is denying either the divine element or the human element in Jesus. As a matter of fact, much of the recent rethinking of christology has been grounded in the fact that theologians like Schillebeeckx and Rahner and Schoonenberg have taken very seriously the reality of Jesus's humanness—as we all must if our faith is to agree with the Gospels or with the Council of Chalcedon.

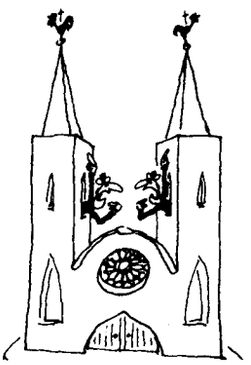
If Jesus was truly human in his historical life, genuinely human as we are; and if in his risen life he remains genuinely human; then we cannot deny to him in his days in Galilee and Judea the limitations and uncertainties and development of consciousness that are intrinsic to being human. Yet, somehow over the past centuries there crept into Christian belief about Jesus some denial of Jesus's full humanity—we did not think we should admit that he had doubts, that he could make mistakes, that he was uncertain about the course the future would take, that he was integrally sexual and emotionally passionate as we are, that he grew in his own self-identification, that he was limited in his human knowledge and conditioned as we all are by the language and culture and historical situation that were his. Today Catholic theologians, because of more careful examination of the New Testament—that means a more careful look at the way Jesus thought of himself and the way in which Jesus's earliest disciples thought of him—no longer repeat statements that seemed to glorify Jesus but actually obscured the revelation that he was and is.

At least part of the upset caused by Catholic theologians comes because they no longer repeat these misleading ideas. Official criticism of Küng and Schillebeeckx and Schoonenberg has often been directed more at what they did not say than at precise statements they did make. Very understandably, some people who had linked belief in Jesus's divine identity to certain characteristics like inerrancy that they attributed to the historical Jesus now feel that theologians' denial of such characteristics threatens Christian belief in Jesus as the Son of God.

However, theology's ministry is that of using careful and disciplined research and reflection in order to help the church to more accurate understanding of its Lord and of itself. Theologians may not in conscience abandon this charismatic role. And today that means that Catholic theologians may not avoid the real questions that are being asked about Jesus's identity and role, questions that have taken on new shape and new urgency, not only because of the advance of critical knowledge in Western consciousness, but also because of our Western world's exposure to the true depth and insight of other great world religions such as Buddhism and Islam.

IF MODERN THOUGHT has been distinguished by its critical attitude toward knowledge, it has been equally marked by its *consciousness of history*. Previous ages of humans had, of course, known that there was a sequence of human happenings that one called "history"; and the religious outlook of both Old and New Testament literature had been distinguished by its linear historical view. Yet, it remained for the past couple of hundred years to lay stress on the historical aspect of human life, to be concerned about "what actually happened" at earlier points in the human odyssey on this earth, to accept development and even evolution of the human race.

What this has meant for Christian thought and life is that we have quite recently raised questions about the actual historical realities of Jesus's life (What was Jesus really like? What did he actually say?), about the actual circumstances surrounding the beginnings of Christianity (What was the earliest Christian experience of Jesus's resurrection? How did church structures, such as the episcopacy, actually come into existence?), about the concrete situation in which doctrinal formulations of church councils and popes and bishops and theologians were made (How free, for example, were the bishops at Vatican I



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when they agreed to papal infallibility?). In some circles theologians have been blamed for raising such disturbing questions; but it has been historians (Christian and non-Christian), not theologians, who have raised them—and inevitably, because of humanity's increasing historical awareness.

But there are other unsettling aspects to modern historical consciousness. It involves the recognition that all human existing is *existing in history*, i.e., in a process of unavoidable and irreversible change; a recognition that any given moment of human experience is conditioned by all the factors that make up that moment, and must be understood in relation to all those factors. No happening, and therefore no statement, can be considered absolute; it may point to the absolute, it may be grounded in certain absolutes; but it itself is always relative to such things as the use of language at that moment and the cultural influences that touched those who made the statement.

All this is bothersome: earlier we had attributed to dogmatic statements of councils or popes an absoluteness that no human statement can have. We had considered them unalterable, adequate as formulations of faith for all future generations. And we tended to think the same about some of the institutions of the church, such as the episcopacy. At least to some extent, we had overstated our case; we had claimed a degree of unchangeableness that is incompatible with our human historical way of existing.

Many are justifiably concerned about such talk of relativity in human knowledge and in formulations of Christian faith, particularly when it touches ethical reflection, because the notion of relativity in moral thinking seems to leave each person to his or her devices and to threaten the very moral fabric of society. The only hope of a genuine response to the situation lies in a widespread development of mature conscience among Christians (and others) and the nurturing of an ethical wisdom within society through continuing public discourse on relevant moral issues.

TO MAKE a long story short, we Catholics today are faced with the need to believe in the midst of less certainty than we thought we had. Our faith must involve more personal decision, therefore more risk and more commitment of our individual and corporate freedom. Neither faith nor grace nor freedom is cheap in today's world.

We need guidance, now more than ever before; and where are we to find it? Catholics have been raised to expect such guidance from the church; and this is precisely the confusion of the present moment—there are conflicting views within the church, with theological and official leadership seemingly at odds. In this situation it would be a mistake to look for one all-sufficient guide. No one agency alone is able to provide the kind of direction the present moment requires, not the papacy as focus of episcopal witness, not the worldwide episcopacy, not theologians, not charismatic individuals—for the Spirit is given to *the entire community*.

What is needed—and has been needed for many years—is open and careful discussion that includes all the responsible voices in the church. We need to devise structures by which the bishops' collegial witness to apostolic tradition can openly interact with the reflection and research of scholars and both can be challenged by the life experience of devoted Christians. Many of us are deeply concerned that the present mood of the Vatican seems opposed to this: instead of open conversation, frank and careful debate on matters that are of deepest concern to all of us, matters about which all of us have much to learn, the Congregation is operating in the inquisitorial mode, holding secret investigations in which the interested parties are not even allowed to have input.

The fact that this procedure continues after Vatican II does not necessarily mean that there is ill will or stubborn clinging to power on the part of Vatican officials. If theologians feel deeply responsible for the accuracy of Christian understanding of faith, so do those in official positions. Really, there seems to be serious confusion about the role of theologians in the church and an even more basic confusion regarding the kind of authority that is appropriate to the church in its ministry of teaching. Certainly, many bishops and many in the Vatican do not accept the role for theologians that we mentioned earlier: namely, one of exploring for new insights and leading the church to clearer and deeper understandings. Instead, these church officials feel that theologians' principal function is to defend and justify what they (i.e., church officials) have decided is to be said.

As for the understanding of "authority" when it touches teaching in the church: We may here be at the bottom of the presently painful confrontation between the Vatican and the theologians they are condemning. The basic question is not: "Does the pope (or a bishop) have authority that obedient Catholics must recognize?"; the question is: "What *kind* of authority does the pope have when he participates in or regulates the ministry of theology or the ministry of teaching?" And here we must say quite clearly that the possession of jurisdictional authority (i.e., the authority attached to office) does not of itself give one authority in either theology or teaching. The only ground for legitimate authority in teaching is accurate understanding; one can communicate truth only if one possesses truth.

Catholics believe that the bishops as a group, centered in the bishop of Rome, possess and communicate the truth upon which Christianity is grounded: the event of Jesus's death and resurrection; and no theological opinion that denies this central truth can be considered genuinely Catholic. But when we move out beyond this core reality to which the papacy and episcopacy witness, when we move to questions about the meaning and applicability of Christ's death and resurrection, other kinds of knowledge and experience enter the picture, and one has authority to speak in proportion to the knowledge and experience he or she has. Truth cannot be legislated, even by one who has the highest legitimate official authority in the church; truth must be discovered.

BUT WOULDN'T it be better for the church at this present disturbed time, if theologians were simply to submit, be silent, loyal and obedient, painful as that might be? The problem with this "solution" is that it would

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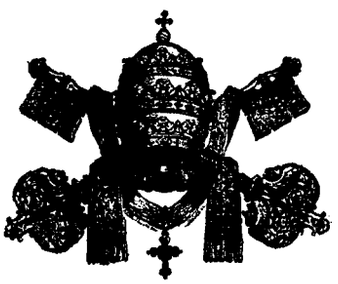
be neither obedience nor loyalty. Every Christian is bound to witness to the true God, the true Jesus Christ, the true Gospel—one cannot be asked to do otherwise, and to do so would be the betrayal of one's faith. More precisely, if a theologian knows that the claims of an ecclesiastical judge go beyond his legitimate authority, to submit to this judge is not obedience. Such submission might be any one of several things—charity, or cowardice, or pragmatic capitulation in order to keep on serving the church; but it could not be authentic obedience, which can be directed only to *legitimate* exercise of authority.

Aware of the delicacy and importance of this whole affair, many groups of theologians are asking for a public, high-level airing of the entire matter, instead of the secret and disturbing methods now being employed. Their reason for this plea is not simply to protect fellow-theologians who, at least to all appearances, are being treated unjustly. There is at stake the very sacramentality of the church: the church of Christ is meant to be a light, a sign that truth need never be feared, a community whose life manifests a loving openness to a variety of gifts and insights. Theologians who love the church, who cherish their Catholic traditions, do not wish their church to give even the impression of fearing the discovery of truth. Their plea to the pope and the bishops is quite simple: Can we not love and trust one another enough, so that we can speak fearlessly and candidly to one another, listen carefully to one another, and so together provide that kind of guidance that the church and the world so sorely need at this moment?



QUESTIONS STILL NOT ANSWERED

Lord Acton, power, & papal infallibility

JOHN GARVEY

The human element in ecclesiastical administration endeavors to keep itself out of sight, and to deny its existence, in order that it may secure the unquestioning submission which authority naturally desires, and may preserve that halo of infallibility which the twilight of opinion enables it to assume. Now the most severe exposure of the part played by this human element is found in histories which show the undeniable existence of sin, error, or fraud, in the high places of the Church. Not, indeed, that any history furnishes, or can furnish, materials for undermining the authority which the dogmas of the Church proclaim to be necessary for her existence. But the true limits of legitimate authority are one thing, and the area which authority may find it expedient to attempt to occupy is another. The interests of the Church are not necessarily identical with those of the ecclesiastical government.

Lord Acton

THE RECENT Vatican moves against Hans Küng's theology have overshadowed other Vatican developments which are every bit as significant. Not only was Edward Schillebeeckx called in for questioning, but a radical French Dominican, Jacques Pohier, was forbidden to exercise any priestly functions because of his unorthodox views. In addition, the Vatican ordered laicization proceedings begun against Father August B. Hasler, author of *How the Pope Became Infallible*. This is particularly ironic in view of the fact that the requested laicizations of those who want them are now being routinely denied, as they were not under Paul VI. Was it because of Küng's popularity that he was not suspended from the priesthood? His popularity certainly has to do with the outcry which attended the Vatican's attempt to revoke Küng's credentials.

Some of Küng's thinking is arguably unorthodox. In *On Being a Christian* he seems ambivalent about the divinity of Jesus, and he does not give enough weight to the importance of tradition. His theology is in some ways a recent version of nineteenth century liberal Protestantism. But there is a question here which is as important as the question of orthodoxy: does Küng have a right to draw his inspiration from unorthodox sources, and take it where it leads him? (Aquinas did, from Aristotle and the Muslims, both wild sources in their day, and he also had opponents in the hierarchy.) Wouldn't the Vatican's role as guardian of orthodoxy in the West have been served better if it had issued a statement detailing its disagreements with Küng and—this is essential—the reasons for those disagreements? If Rome worries about the orthodoxy of the clerical students Küng teaches, couldn't it require of seminarians a course which would put forward a more orthodox viewpoint, allowing them the liberty to attend Küng's courses as well? Or is there a fear that Küng's arguments are really more persuasive? It is not the concern for orthodoxy which bothers me, but the way which it has been implemented.

People who believe that freedom is an essential part of Christianity have had some bad signs lately. Pope John Paul II

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denies laicization to men who, for whatever reasons, do not believe that they can serve as priests and remain good Christians. It is unfair to impose an angry and frustrated man on a community which would probably be just as happy if he left.

But there is a deeper unfairness: the man who applies for laicization has shown his good will toward the church; he wishes to remain a member, and simply wants a change in status. Baptism, after all, is the basic sacrament, and the person seeking laicization wants to remain in communion with the church of his birth, life, and (he hopes) death. Is a specific legal discipline really more important than this desire? The Orthodox church has been able to grant laicization without any problems to priests whose wives have died and who wish to remarry. What Gospel truth does Rome show by being less compassionate? There is still another problem, underscored by the case of August Hasler: the insistence that an unorthodox priest accept the lay state, and the denial of that state to priests who want to live as laymen, makes priesthood a kind of status—an inversion of the Gospel approach to service.

It is ironic that this has happened during the reign of a pope who is clearly concerned about human rights, and who has made dramatic ecumenical moves toward the Orthodox church. How reassured can Orthodox or Protestant observers be, when they see this commitment to human rights and the unity of Christians so easily and confidently qualified within the pope's immediate sphere of influence? The Catholic Eastern Rites are not allowed to choose their own bishops or, in the West, to have a married clergy (these problems precede John Paul); and scholars are once again made to feel that they must toe a line, or—taking the more traditional Catholic course—talk a kind of code which will not, in the words of the old compilations of heresy, "offend pious ears." The message of this pontificate seems to be that nothing much changes, and that this is not only the same church, but the same *sort* of church, which produced Pius IX and gave him power.

PIUS IX and the doctrine of infallibility are important here, because the authority claimed by the magisterium is a kind of aura which surrounds that doctrine. The magisterium does not always claim infallibility, but it ordinarily demands obedience; and the questions raised by the latest uses of Vatican power were given their sharpest form during the debates which surrounded the First Vatican Council.

As the doctrine of papal infallibility gathered support during the years following the Reformation and the Enlightenment, so did Catholic opposition to it. Ironically, much of this opposition came from groups who strike us today as conservative, such as the Jansenist movement, and some support for infallibility came from liberals who saw in a strong papacy the only alternative to the absolute demands of the modern state. Pius IX entered office as a liberal, but came to see in modern thinking a profound threat to Christianity. Under the influence of the Jesuit editors of *Civilta Cattolica* he began to believe that papal infallibility was necessary to Catholicism. In 1854 he declared the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception (the first time in Christian history that a doctrine had been declared

independently of an ecumenical council), and later he arranged the agenda of the First Vatican Council, doing everything within his power to secure the votes of the minority who opposed the doctrine. An open letter to Vatican I puts all of this in an interesting context: there the revolutionary leader Mazzini says that even if the Council declares the pope infallible, the revolution will still take the papal states. This is some of what was at stake, and Pius IX didn't hesitate to use excommunication against Italian liberals who disagreed with him about the temporal power of the papacy.

All of this was noted by the nineteenth century British Catholic historian Lord Acton*, an opponent of infallibility who remained in the church despite the fact that he could not accept the doctrine. Lord Acton raised questions more than a hundred years ago which still have not been answered well.

Acton's approach to history—to all of history, not just the church—was profoundly conservative. He was convinced that the attempts of institutions to gain, and then to extend their power, were a primary source of human misery. His most famous words deserve to be placed in their context, a letter he wrote to his friend Mandell Creighton: "I cannot accept your canon that we are to judge Pope and King unlike other men, with a favorable presumption that they did no wrong. If there is any presumption it is the other way, against holders of power, increasing as the power increases. Historic responsibility has to make up for want of legal responsibility. Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely. Great men are almost always bad men, even when they exercise influence and not authority: still more when you superadd the tendency or the certainty of corruption by authority. There is no worse heresy than that the office sanctifies the holder of it."

Acton believed that it was necessary for the papacy to acquire a certain amount of power; among other things, the power of the papacy enabled the church in the West to survive the barbarian invasions, a problem not faced by the Eastern churches. But the growth of papal power was hardly an unmixed blessing. It was used in time for evil as well as good: popes called for holy wars, instituted the Inquisition, and

*All quotation from Lord Acton are from *Lord Acton on Papal Power*, edited by H. A. MacDougall (Sheed & Ward, London, 1973).

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established the Index of Forbidden Books. There were too many contradictions in Catholic history to allow the declaration of infallibility, Acton thought. It was an article of his faith as an historian that the church must the studied as objectively as any other institution, and he saw the definition of infallibility as an attempt to put the church and its teachings beyond objective scrutiny.

In Acton's view, the whole of tradition is the only guardian of orthodoxy. It reveals, over the long haul, the true faith of the church. The church "exists expressly for the purpose of preserving a definite body of truths, the knowledge of which she can never lose. Whatever authority therefore expresses that knowledge of which she is the keeper must be obeyed. But there is no institution from which this knowledge can be gained with immediate certainty. A council is not *a priori* ecumenical; the Holy See is not separately infallible. The one has to await a sanction; the other has repeatedly erred."

Pius IX, however, was capable of saying—presumably he believed it—"I am tradition." Despite the lobbying of Acton and others, the majority of bishops at the First Vatican Council agreed with the new definition. The doctrine of papal infallibility was, as a result, made a formal part of the Catholic system. According to Vatican I, the pope can speak without error, even when he speaks separately from a church council, as long as he speaks *ex cathedra*; an ecumenical council is also allegedly free from the possibility of doctrinal error.

This, Acton wrote to Döllinger (a former teacher and a leader in the Old Catholic movement initiated by those who were excommunicated because they could not accept the decisions of Vatican I), was corrupting to the conscience and led to a false view of history: "Thus, when Pius V demanded that the Huguenot prisoners should be put to death, he did right, for he was pope, and a saint to boot. Since Charles Borromeo approved the murdering of Protestants by private persons, it is better to approve it than to call his canonization into question! Or, one moral aberration is got rid of by another. Many of the leading Catholic writers of this century deny that Gregory XIII approved the massacre of St. Bartholomew, or that heretics have ever been put to death at Rome. This spirit, which falsifies history and corrupts morals, is the crying sin of modern Catholicism, and it reaches high enough."

GRANTING that at Vatican II, and for years before, there was no simple defense of ecclesiastical murder, and granting that Acton's examples do not involve statements which are officially declared to be "matters of faith," the fact is that the assumption of many Catholics, and certainly the assumption of the Vatican, is that the Vatican should be trusted in matters of faith because it *is* the Vatican. Seriously questioning its right to define doctrine without challenge or even consultation, or its ability to do so in the past, is likely to get a theologian into hot water.

Hot water *does* beat boiling oil. The cases of Pohier, Schillebeeckx, and Küng are not as severe as many earlier examples, and John Paul II has not shown himself to be authoritarian in the fashion of Pius IX. But we must notice that this is the first time this sort of thing has happened since Vatican II. That Council was the first to refrain from using the words *anathema sit*. Many people believed that it heralded a new spirit in the church, and a move away from the spirit of Vatican I. But we may have been wrong about that. In the Vatican declaration Küng's views on infallibility are challenged before his ambivalent views on the divinity of Jesus and the place of Mary are even mentioned. That is revealing. Equally revealing is the argument that because the magisterium has spoken about infallibility, Küng's task should be "to conform to the doctrine of the magisterium." The magisterium has spoken, Q.E.D., you should stop thinking.

The problem is the record of the magisterium. At the Council of Florence the magisterium said that Jews and schismatics were definitely damned. Father Feeney was excommunicated in this century for defending too vigorously this earlier but presumably true opinion of the magisterium, which was declared with all the solemnity required to make it, by Vatican I's definition, an infallible statement. In the past, and with equal gravity, the magisterium has condemned the taking of any interest on money, not for reasons of justice but rather as a violation of natural law. The magisterum has denied the liberty of conscience, and has refused the right of non-Catholics to religious freedom; and these are only a few examples of the magisterium's sure way of saying the wrong thing.

A traditional answer to observations like this is that, *properly understood*, the Council of Florence didn't really mean what it said about Jews and schismatics. How do we get this proper understanding? Who is to tell us how black can mean white? The magisterium of course. The magisterium is not, by itself, a safe guide. It must be seen and finally judged in the light of a tradition which is wider and deeper than the temporary occupants of the Vatican. Perhaps this latest crisis, and the decent response of some Catholic writers (though far from all; one theologian is reported to have refused any support for Küng because he has a book coming out and doesn't want to jeopardize its chances) will give us the courage to continue to look objectively at such ideas as infallibility, which is currently defended without reference to those historical ideas which contradict it. Now that the temporal power of the papacy is gone, the strength of the magisterium lies in a continued defense of the doctrine of infallibility. But this doctrine certainly must be examined critically: it is the single biggest stumbling block to the unity of Christians. Acton foresaw this problem, too: if infallibility came to be an accepted doctrine, he wrote, "the chances of union with the Greeks, the means of discussion with the Protestants, would vanish utterly, and Catholicism would forfeit its expanding power."

The good news is that conversation between us has not vanished utterly; the church has weathered worse times. There is a story, maybe apocryphal, that Lord Acton was asked, after Vatican I had ratified Pius IX's doctrine of infallibility, whether he would leave the church. He answered, "Just because the Pope has changed his religion, I see no reason to change mine." That spirit, and that humor, may sustain us more than anything else.

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A STATEMENT WITH SIX RESPONSES

Is the church an idol?

CHARLES DAVIS

IN *Freedom For Ministry* (Harper & Row, $8.95), Richard Neuhaus has written a worthy book of advice and exhortation to Christian ministers. It has the balance, insight and good sense we should expect of someone with the author's personal experience of the Lutheran ministry in the inner city. On the other hand, in its substantial content, the book does not say anything particularly new. Despite the different denominational voice, I could parallel most of it from books I read when preparing for the priesthood some thirty or so years ago. A short laudatory notice would therefore meet the bill, and indeed a short notice was all that this reviewer was asked for. I risk, therefore, being unfair in using this book with its limited objective as a foil for a general critique of the church and its credibility.

However, Neuhaus has to bear part responsibility for provoking the present reflections. The book, not surprisingly, seeing that Neuhaus was one of the originators of the Hartford Appeal of 1975, contains an emphatic affirmation of the church as a manifestation of transcendence and a repeated denunciation of all those (sometimes identified as "theologians of liberation") who lose or obscure that transcendence by seeking a conformity with modern thought or values. The author himself designates his book as "a critical affirmation of the church and its mission," and his treatment of the theoretical and practical problems of the Christian ministry is based upon a clearly articulated and strongly held belief in the church. The force of his statement on the church has challenged my own position and compelled me to analyze why I still remain in disagreement. The fact that he writes from a Lutheran, not a Catholic perspective, makes his challenge more fundamental.

What, then, is his concept of the church? He considers that thinking about the church suffers from a prevalent anti-institutionalism. But there is, he asserts, only one church. In other words, it is false to put the "true church" over against the empirical church. The church defined theologically and the church defined sociologically are one and the same: the two accounts are two descriptions of the one Christian people. Hence Neuhaus rejects the idea that the church has to die before it can rise again. That is to confuse institutional collapse with the way of the Cross and to indulge in a nostalgia for the catacombs. We should not regret that the church is institutionally strong. Despite all its defects, it is on the whole for the good of millions of people.

Two points qualify the general affirmation. First, we should not identify the real church with what now exists. In viewing the church in terms of possibility and promise, we are not parting from reality but simply embracing the greater reality. Again, institution is not to be equated with organization. We must not identify the church as an institution with a particular form of organization; the organizations of the church are subordinate to its institution. Hence one can belong to any denomination, provided the particular group does not separate itself from the larger body.

As regards its purpose, the church or Christian institution is in service to the Kingdom. In more detail: "It is the purpose of the church to *sight*, to *signal*, to *support*, and to *celebrate* the future of all human kind. This is what it means to say the church is a sacrament. It is the partial actualization of the reality of the Kingdom" (p. 104—Neuhaus's emphases).

The consequence is plain: "Secular or churchless Christianity must be rejected because in fact there is no Christianity apart from the historical community that bears its truth, however inadequately" (p. 53). Or, to put it in another way: what is truly creative in the order of prophecy is "on behalf of and not against a great tradition" (p. 132). Even though, of course, "there is ever so much in the empirical church of which we must be relentlessly critical" (p. 20).

Let me admit that the case thus made out for the church as an institution is most plausible. For me personally it renewed all the impact of the objections previously made to me by many

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whose own commitment I admired, objections to the effect that my protest would have been of greater service had I remained within the institution and that to leave was to enter into a barren desert as far as the Christian life was concerned. I have felt those objections strongly in the past. An outsider does feel isolated and ineffectual, and, since oddity is always open to mockery, somewhat ridiculous. Reading Neuhaus's book renewed their force, probably not just by itself, but helped by the context of the election of Pope John Paul II and the prevailing sense that the Catholic church was about to move out of the stagnation and partial reversal that followed Vatican II. Nevertheless, earnest reflection has left me unconvinced—still the unrepentant outsider, despite the fact that the welcome given me again and again by Catholics has frequently tempted me to slip without fuss into a renewed if informal membership.

It would take a book fully to follow up all the lines of thought now pulling my mind. Here I shall simply try to indicate the more insistent.

TO BEGIN WITH, the "relentless criticism" advertised by Neuhaus and others is a sham, because what is shouted with one breath is quietly taken back with the next breath. It is for this reason that many people can abide "critical" ecclesiology a good deal less than the old conservative variety. It promises without delivering, and its evasive dexterity leaves them doubting their own common sense perceptions. The familiar procedure of heartily admitting, with vivid description, all that is objectionable, but then declaring that, deplorable though the defects might be, they leave the essential intact is found quite early on in Neuhaus's book:

> To be sure, we all deplore the superficiality, the cheap grace, the caricature of Christian discipleship that mark some of the most successful peddling of the gospel in our time. The hustling that dominates "the electronic church" of religious broadcasting, the mile-long cathedrals of glass made possible by the avoidance of controversy, the multimillion dollar commerce in books that reinforce every prejudice and stereotype—all this is repugnant on many scores. And yet, and yet: through all this, millions of people are receiving a more adequate and truthful view of the world than they might otherwise have (p. 6).

Really! I see no reason to suppose that destructive activities carried on by churches do not in fact destroy, and the efficacy of destructive church activities in warding off even more destructive activities has to be shown, not simply piously assumed. My own contention is that the churches are an obstacle to the development of sound relationships and activities, and it has, I think, at least as much going for it as the assumption that without the churches things would be far worse than they are. How many obsolete social institutions in history have been supported beyond their time by admitting all the harm they do, but arguing that without them things would be even worse? Neuhaus himself gives the game away by making a greater admission than his defense can consistently allow. Later on in the book he writes: "It is probably fair to say that, as often as not, the communal life of Christians has obscured rather than signaled the love of God" (p. 106). If that means anything at all, it is equivalent to saying that historically the church has done more harm than good—an admission I find impossible to reconcile with the general contention that it does more good than harm. Neuhaus's language and examples have a Protestant flavor, but the same attempt to have it both ways is found in Catholic writers. I am reminded of the Catholic theologian, Metz, who tried to define the church as the institution of social-critical freedom, while at the same time admitting that there has hardly been a single idea of critical societal importance that has not at least once been disallowed by the institutions of historical Christianity *(Theology of the World,* p. 117).

Bluntly, the ability to swallow every criticism, every objection, without its being allowed to affect one's commitment is for me the sign of an absolute and therefore idolatrous commitment to the church as an institution. The penalty for idolatry is unreality, because of the nothingness of idols. Those who are seduced into unconditional loyalty are lost in an unreal world, in which images and talk of the People of God cloak membership of socially backward and often harmful institutions. Possibility and promise, when real and not imaginary, are rooted in present reality, not an excuse for its absence.

My own assessment of the Christian church in both its history and present existence corresponds to the negative admissions of Neuhaus, Metz and its other defenders: namely, that it has obscured rather than manifested Christian love and other Christian values. The ruling Christian tradition in its institutional forms and collective, social action, as distinct from its verbal professions of belief, has by and large not acted so as to release all human beings, men and women, to become free subjects, acting together in responsible co-operation and mutual respect to create a worthy human existence. It has simply reflected or reinforced whatever has been the contemporary pattern of domination.

I RECOGNIZE that in asking for a different history I am asking for what is sociologically impossible from any permanent institution that being permanent represents the continuity of history. Human history in its continuity is the history of the victors not of the vanquished, of the oppressors not of the oppressed, of the rulers not of their subjects, of the successful not of the failures. The defeated, the oppressed, the slaves, the poor do not constitute the flow of history, but are in the stream as unconnected eddies, which check but do not alter the onward movement of the main current. The continuity of Christian history, like that of states and empires, is that of the victorious orthodox, not of the defeated heretics, that of the ruling élites, not of their subjects. There is and can be no continuous history of heresy and dissidence as there is a history of orthodoxy. The victorious orthodox like other conquerors have suppressed the heretical witnesses, but in any event there was no continuity, but instead discontinuous though con-

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stantly renewed instances of refusal, rebellion and protest. Nor is there a history of the beliefs and norms by which ordinary Christian people actually lived. History is an account of the official teaching and the imposed norms. What, for example, do we know of the actual sexual morality as lived by Christian married people in the past, as distinct from what the ruling clerical élite was telling them to think and do? Excluded from institutional expression, their lives have been forgotten and have no history.

The struggle for human freedom has no stable institutions. It runs against the grain of human history. By freedom I mean the actualization of human beings, men and women, as creative subjects, participating together in the project of making a world corresponding to human needs and interests, which I am not limiting to the material and secular. The opposite of freedom is when participation in the common human enterprise is blocked or hindered by a structure of domination that denies to some—in historical fact, to the greater number—their full dignity as human subjects, excluding them from the right and the means of sharing in the making of the human world.

So far the ongoing course of human history has been a succession of patterns of domination. The very conception of history as a continuum with a goal is a ruling-class conception. Those who are now on top can see history as leading to themselves. The blacks in America cannot see American history as culminating with themselves. They are outside its design; it is not their history. The poor everywhere are outside the movement of history. But there is no other historical continuum. The poor have no history. Their liberation must be by the creation of a new pattern of meaning, standing over against the flow of events. It will not be a history, but a configuration of discrete, paradigmatic events.

The crucifixion was not part of the flow of either Jewish or Roman history; it rightly has no place in any account of the permanent institutions of those nations. It was an isolated, discrete event of no significance within national or imperial history. It liberated, not by capturing the flow of history—indeed, it lost much of its liberating power when the rulers of history captured it. As liberating, it became the center of a new configuration, which grouped and conferred meaning upon people scattered throughout past, present and future that had no history, because they were the poor and oppressed of this world.

If we understand history as the ongoing course of social actions and events, interpreted in such a way that the significant past is taken as what has led to and is in continuity with the social present, then women in the world, like the blacks in America, have no history. History is and has been the denial of their human subjecthood. What they have to do is to recover in memory some of the forgotten women and their actions, which history has not succeeded in fully erasing, and form those discrete elements into a constellation of meaning that stands over against the continuity of history and rejects its pattern of meaning.

The drift of what I am saying is that the whole Catholic concept of the church, shared, as we have seen from Neuhaus, more or less by other Christian churches, to the effect that the Christian people, the redeemed community, is embodied in a stable institution, with an official ministry, a hierarchy of authority and a continuous meaningful tradition from its origins to the present, is just a religious transposition of the structure of domination that has determined and still determines the very conception of human history as well as its ongoing course. It is to be hoped that the personal qualities and intelligence of Pope John Paul II will highlight for many the unacceptability of the papacy as an institution—a first step on the way of recognizing the unacceptability of the church. People will perhaps come to realize that what they were rejecting was not merely the individual outlook and policy of Pope Paul VI, but the very conception that a man (women will here emphasize the gender) should claim to make declarations of belief and lay down norms of conduct on their behalf without their full participation in the formation of those beliefs and norms.

This is a ruling-class pattern of social order, however mystified by appeals to divinely-bestowed authority. It runs into contradiction with the growing self-understanding many have of themselves as full human subjects of their social and individual existence, even though they are largely prevented from putting it into effect. Those who have come to recognize themselves as excluded from history in the past and present are unlikely to be moved by appeals to the authority of historical institutions and the continuity of tradition. They rightly see such appeals as an invitation to heteronomy, not an indication of a source of personal and social liberation.

AM I not falling into a naive anti-institutionalism? Human beings cannot live socially, let alone create highly civilized societies, without establishing institutions, which by definition are stable formations. These institutions are never perfect, are always open to criticism and change; yet, it is only in and through them that we can effectively act for human development and liberation. Surely, a policy of non-participation is a withdrawal from the human enterprise into a helpless passivity or destructive negativity.

Yes, I agree with all that, but it does not meet the point of my objection to the church. Let me explain, because a further precision is indeed needed.

Social institutions are a necessary part of human existence, but they must not claim religious authority. The contradiction I want to uncover and protest against is in the conception of a purely religious, stable institution. That it is which is a deceit and illusion. Not religious faith itself, but the purely religious institution, possessed of authority and historical continuity, is the sham. It represents the appropriation of the hope of the poor by whatever happens to be the ruling class. It is the assimilation of protest and the claiming of transcendence as a piece of property in possession.

All institutional religion is a part of the economic, social and political order. To declare otherwise is a pretense. Would anything be left of the Catholic church in America if it gave up its property and thus severed its involvement in American

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business? It is the failure to recognize the institutional church for what it is as deeply involved in the structure and functioning of society that makes reading ecclesiology like entry into a massive and complex lie or being lost in a maze of illusion.

I prefer my economics and politics straight, without the dilution of the religious mix, which I think is rightly seen as a cover-up. I am prepared to participate in the ongoing life of my society, acknowledging the compromises that inevitably involves; doing my best, but sadly aware that I am inevitably implicated in a history of injustice and oppression. But for me religious faith is the factor of non-participation, the refusal to be recruited, the denial that the ongoing movement of history, which is in the interests of some but not of all, which is governed by power and not by love, represents the meaning and end of human existence.

I know that sociologists, legitimately for their purposes, give religion a wider definition and scope, but I want to reject much that usually comes under the heading of religion. I am identifying religious faith with the moment of non-participation that reaches a transcendence present as limiting all human institutions, which as transcendence cannot be separately institutionalized without contradiction. The non-participation of religious faith directs the search for meaning away from the continuity of human history to discontinuous paradigmatic configurations, uniting scattered events of the past with happenings of the present, joining the forgotten, the slain, the victims of the past with the poor and oppressed of the present, finding a source and center of meaning in their protest.

The history of salvation is not main-line history, nor is it a continuity parallel to main-line history. It is not in that sense a history at all, but a repeated apocalyptic subversion of history through its intersection by a saving power and a faith-vision. The apocalyptic lightning-flashes group together people and events unnoticed by and consequently nonexistent for the mighty of this world. That all the discrete configurations of meaning will somehow all fit together in the end is a hope for the *eschaton*, not to be sought as realized in the continuity of any historical institution.

IS THERE, then, no institutional expression of non-participation and subversion? Certainly not in the form of a stable institution with a structure of authority and a continuous history. I suggest that religious faith as a permanent attitude of non-participation finds indirect social expression in the struggle to keep social and political institutions open and in the refusal to accept their claims to totality.

Religious faith is not a separate sphere of human activity and endeavor, and for that reason it finds its institutional expressions not apart from but within the secular institutions of society. At the same time, protest also expresses itself socially in unstable and transitory groups and movements. These come and go. The People of God or the redeemed community of the Spirit is a scattered people, a diaspora. The attempt to house it in a permanent institution is a disguised imprisonment or at least a bid to domesticate the Spirit and thus soften the subversive demands of human freedom.

It is worth noting that Neuhaus's defense of the church, like that of many others, parallels the argument previously made by the defenders of paternalistic absolute monarchy as a social system: namely, that, despite all its abuses and defects, it is for the good of millions of ordinary people. Those who claim spiritual rule always say that it is for the good of ordinary people, who, it is understood, cannot be trusted if left to themselves. It does not seem to occur to those who claim religious authority that things might be a great deal better if ordinary people were allowed the freedom that belongs to them as human subjects. We do need spiritual leaders, people who can open our minds and hearts to a new vision, but such leaders should not sit on thrones nor wear the trappings of authority, nor should they tell us that our freedom consists in accepting a teaching and a history which are not and have never been ours.

John L. McKenzie

'A RELIGIOUS COP-OUT?'

THE LAST TIME I engaged in a discussion with Charles Davis 2600 people paid admission to the ballroom of the Palmer House in Chicago where seats had been prepared for 1800. We did not draw as well as the Lyric Opera or the Chicago Blackhawks, but the talent was not as well paid. Intra-church debates, however, were much more exciting in 1967 than they are in 1980. Charles Davis had then renounced his allegiance to the institutional church, and I have retained my own allegiance. Neither of us seems entirely happy with our unchanged positions. He has declared above why he has retained his position; I am invited to declare why I have retained mine.

Charles Davis argues well, as always; and he recalls for me the sinking feeling I had in our debate that I was compelled to defend the indefensible. My position was not unlike the position of General Cambronne at Waterloo, and it would not be helped by recourse to his celebrated *mot*. Some famous Irish wit whose name escapes me abandoned his Roman Catholicism; when he was asked whether he intended to join a Protestant church, he answered, "I renounced my faith, not my reason." Belief in the church is not a rational assent; it is an act of faith, and I cannot justify my faith as rational. If the Irish wit thought that Roman Catholic Christianity was more rational than Protestant Christianity, it is no wonder that he renounced it. He should have done so sooner.

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I am not just protecting myself in advance against assured failure by giving up rational apologetics, although I do admit there are some things I cannot do. I cannot rationally defend civilized humanity as a viable species, but I cannot opt out of humanity either. I suppose as an argument from parity this is less than overwhelming. There has always been a flight from the world in some sense or other, and there have always been a few who found the human community intolerable.. Some of the fugitives, like Diogenes and Thoreau, were as phony as a three-dollar bill. Others, like the monks of the desert, appear at least superficially more genuine. One who flees the world and stays within reach of the corner grocery and the neighborhood drug store makes one wonder. When I say the monks look more genuine, I mean they seem to be real cop-outs.

I suppose I am hinting that Charles Davis is a religious cop-out. I do not mean to hint this, especially since I am not yet too old to detach myself from the institution. But Davis has made it clear not only that the church can do nothing for him, but that he can do nothing for the church—and more important, that the church is not worth doing anything for. This, of course, leads right to the question which within this space I can only ask: is there a valid distinction between the institutional church and the church as community? This has been asked so many times and not answered that I feel embarrassed at raising the question again. If the answer is affirmative, it has to be an affirmation of faith. I suppose the reason why I still cling to the affirmation of faith—from which not even John Paul II has yet dislodged me—is that there is no choice between that and the religious solipsism into which Davis is compelled. I would be, I hope, among the last to deny that Jesus called all to personal responsible decision. I do not see how anyone can meet this demand apart from community. If that community is not the church, it is a sect; and I think we have been through that. I fear Davis presents a faith which is indeed within the grasp of the civilized intellectual, and no one else. I am not sure that Jesus spoke to us and our kind at all.

I think of another analogy. Davis, like me, has spent his life within the professional academic community. I am sure that he too prefers that community to any other subcommunity. Only recently I said to a friend and colleague much younger that I was in late middle age before I realized that the academic community is a jungle, and that I still like it because it is the only jungle I know. The criticism Davis levels against the church can easily, *mutatis mutandis*, be leveled against the university. *Alma Mater* is a part-time mother and a full-time whore. One can sustain the thesis that the university is the most powerful single anti-intellectual force in our society. One may ask whether it has even the sorry virtue of staying bought. I am restrained from yielding totally to the temptation of rhetoric, which comes so easily on this topic, only by the inexorable limits of space. Davis has lived in this zoo long enough to share these criticisms. I have not heard him say that the honest intellectual can live only outside the university. I have not heard him say that the university does more good than harm, or that the harm must be tolerated for the greater good. In fact I have not heard him speak to this point at all; possibly he has spoken and I missed it. Perhaps he owes his public an explanation how he can with a good conscience work for a system which deserves the appellation of the Scarlet Woman at least as much as the one I work for.

Davis says: ". . . the whole Catholic concept of the church . . . to the effect that Christian people, the redeemed community, is embodied in a stable institution, with an official ministry, a hierarchy of authority and a continuous meaningful tradition from its origins to the present, is just a religious transposition of the structure of domination that has determined and still determines the very conception of history as well as its ongoing course." And thus he answers my question above about church and community. And he goes on to escape religious solipsism by denying any human community except the social and political community. Is it realistic to hope that isolated concerned individuals can achieve what these individuals united in a religious community are frustrated by the dominant structure from achieving? I had hoped for something better than secular humanism. Maybe that is the only game in town. I can only suggest that the opening of minds and hearts to a new vision for which Davis hopes might begin modestly with serious efforts to get *Alma Mater*, the mother goddess of secular humanism, out of the gutter.

Dolores Leckey

'MIXED & AMBIGUOUS'

CHARLES DAVIS raises a number of issues—some challenging, some questionable—any one of which could engender lively debate. There is his historiography, for example, which I find baffling, but which I leave to historians to illuminate.

There are two other themes in the Davis article, however, to which I want to respond. The first is that of *reality vs. illusion*.

Davis rightly states that the penalty for idolatry—in this case, idolatrous commitment to the church as institution—is unreality. The assumption behind this particular idolatry seems to be that church membership blinds one to all that is mean or petty or grossly unjust in the institution. I question that assumption. Many of us who continue to work for institutional renewal do so because we have come to really believe the fundamental teaching of Vatican II; namely, that the church is a human/divine intermingling, a gathering of sinners as well as prophets, in need of unceasing reform. This is the reality of the Old Testament, Noah's willingness to fill the Ark with clean and unclean creatures, and of the New Testament with the wheat and chaff

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growing side by side. Perhaps to live in reality, then, is to expand one's tolerance for ambiguity while keeping alert enough to know when ambiguity has become moral dilemma. To have a tolerance for ambiguity is not necessarily to be seduced into unconditional loyalty. I have never thought that church membership required suspension of critical thought or the surrender of sovereign conscience.

Most of us ordinary lay people live in families, and families are no strangers to ambiguity. There is a widely held theory that every family member experiences a different social reality within the same setting; in other words, environment differs for everyone. As several of my children have crossed the threshhold to young adulthood, I've seen the theory in practice. I'm acutely aware that some need to stay close to the place of origin while others need space between their growing lives and all that home symbolizes. Creative subjects have different requirements, in the primary family and in the wider church family. I try to respect fluid boundaries for my own family; and when I look at the church I see there a latitude and elasticity that others do not, a case of different environmental experiences, perhaps.

Possibility and promise, Davis writes, when real and not imaginary, are rooted in present reality. The present reality for the ordinary lay person in the church is mixed and ambiguous, like the rest of life. On the one hand, growing numbers of lay people are participating in co-equal and interdependent ways with the ordained, at the heart of the church's ministry. Laity, religious, and clergy are in fact studying together and working together, sharing responsibility for the church's mission in prayer and worship, social services, and administration. It is not widespread, but it is there. Increasing numbers of young Catholics are enrolled in seminaries and divinity schools, shaping a post-Vatican II vocation: to be lay and to be in ministry. Placing this phenomenon beside the major renewal movements of the past ten years—Cursillo, Marriage Encounter, the Charismatic Renewal—which have involved millions of ordinary men and women, not only as recipients of ministry but as agents, we see the possibility of a new egalitarianism developing in the church, echoes of the New Testament church.

On the other hand, shared responsibility at the parish level in general practice at least continues to be frustrated either by clerical abuse of power or by underdeveloped lay leadership and apathy. The subtle and constant demands of the ego do not make life-sharing an easy enterprise. Clergy and laity together will need to learn *how* to engage in mutual ministry, and in so doing I suspect we will have to settle for something less than absolutes.

The second theme that concerns me is Davis's contention that the people of God are scattered only, with the implication that there is little or no value in gathering the community.

I agree with Davis that religious faith is not a separate sphere of human activity but finds its institutional expression within the secular arenas of society. The notion of Christian presence as a potential for transforming societal structures has been a cornerstone of many movements in Catholic history. But it seems for Davis that the scattered church—individuals in their various spheres of work, family, and community—can sufficiently affect society so that justice will reign. There is a certain Rousseau-like suggestion in this position. How, for example, does one shed the societal images of God and move closer toward the truth of God in Christ? The potential, at least, is in the gathered church at worship. Here the symbols of the Christian faith are presented, not to an individual, but to a group, to a people. I tend to believe that these symbols have the power to stir the individual and collective unconscious, to release truer images of God buried in the human heart and in the memory of the people. The worshipping gathered church *can* strengthen one for action, passing on the wisdom of the saints, aligning the lone individual with his or her lineage.

Many ordinary men and women—workers rather than professionals—find the thread of their own history in this communal experience of church, and it is this identity which can sometimes impel the group to act. The memory of the civil rights movement in this country is a memory of *churches*, gathered people bound by a group consciousness and religious unity, empowered to act *as a body*. In this way, the image of God as policeman or landowner was discarded for that of the God of Exodus, the God of freedom.

Finally, I have been asking myself when do I personally and existentially encounter the institutional church? Free associating, I've come up with the following: in my marriage, as the living out of a public sacrament; in my parish where I worship; in my work, which deals with laity and bishops; in the new and old theologians; in my Christian women's group; in spiritual direction; in the litany of the saints; in the richness of Christian contemplation; in the Scriptures; in the preservation of the Feminine through Marian devotion; in the Office of Hours; in vowed religious women and men . . . All of these institutional places have their dark side, but my life would be poorer without them.

Martin E. Marty

'REDUCTIONIST & MANICHEAN'

POGO ("We have faults we have hardly used yet") and I join Richard Neuhaus and Charles Davis in admitting that the church has grievous faults. Beyond that point Pogo, Neuhaus, and Marty by a three to one vote form a structure of dominance and oppression against thus out-numbered Davis, leaving him alone to represent true humanity against our ruling-class conceptions.

Davis beats Neuhaus all hollow in

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their controversy over the possibly redemptive and positive aspects of religion, Christian faith, and the church. He does this by defining religion more narrowly than anyone—Kierkegaard possibly excepted—in Western history. "I am *identifying* religious faith with the moment of non-participation that reaches a transcendence present as limiting all human institutions," he writes, "which as transcendence cannot be separately institutionalized without contradiction." As for the church, it is "*just* a religious transposition of the structure of domination that has determined and still determines the very conception of human history as well as its ongoing course."

Italics mine; emphasis his. And on those terms, all social religion, anything that lasts two moments and is held by two people who want to participate in anything, is out. Neuhaus might as well take his bat and ball and the bases and backstops and go home.

Most of us cannot play by Davis's rules. For one thing, we are less sure the world divides so neatly into oppressor/oppressed, dominator/dominated, ruling-class/revolutionary class, or that people on both sides of those slant bars have nothing on their mind except struggles for liberation. His view sounds reductionist and looks a bit Manichean in its good guy-girl/bad guy-girl division of history. And it is utopian to imagine that only non-religious social groups and non-participating religious isolated beings can produce a world that moves beyond structures of domination. I have yet to see a winning revolutionary cadre, be it in America, France, Mexico, Russia, China, or Third World, that did not issue in a new structure of domination over against which people need other forces than a new revolutionary party in order to preserve their humanity.

I think Davis overlooks some of these forces and the needs to which they appeal. While this is not the place to argue truth claims, we have to observe that just as people do not live by bread alone, they also do not live by revolutionary struggle alone. They often, as Christians, really and truly believe that God is revealed in Christ and that the church is Christ's body, and that this body calls them to social participation in the world. They may be wrong in that grasp, but it is more on their mind than winning a battle against structures of domination.

Just once he whistles past the word 'love.' Neuhaus in his inner city parish and I in pastoral activity, brief or long, in black, blue-collar, white-collar, and ruling-class high-collar parishes, saw that love mattered to people on both sides of the slant bar. Corporate, social, palpable, tangibilificated religious faith in the form of the church meant much to them in cancer wards, nursing homes, snowstorms, as they nurtured their young and sang praises. It tapped them to be generous to the boat people and to pray for the hostages and to criticize shahs all at once.

If I grant the social character of existence and do, contra Davis and Kierkegaard, allow for more than a moment and for participation in the world, and then if I reject the church, I have to reject

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it "compared to what?" His and my academy? I love the university, but it is less reformable in its five-person departments than Catholicism has been in its five-hundred-million membership. If the university is not the island away from structures of domination, then is business, the government, or the revolutionary party? I doubt it. Do they make their claims non-religiously? You do not have to broaden the definition of religion as drastically as Davis has narrowed it to see that all of these cheat and make social, transcendent, participatory, and lasting claims. Shall only the church fight with its hands behind its back—fight, that is, for justice or freedom or love?

I have to invoke Rousseau at this point: you can expect my ideas to be consistent with each other, but you cannot expect me to assert them all at once. So, for several paragraphs, I have had to act as if struggles for freedom and justice are not important, simply because I was addressing other aspects of Catholic faith. Neuhaus and I have been victims of the demonic in the structures of the church in which we were brought up as much as Davis was in his. I hope we are as outraged over injustice in church and world as he is. I have often learned from Davis, and expect still to do so. The non-participating, isolated, momentary, and transcendent religious response ("the Protestant principle of prophetic protest"?) will and should judge and nudge people like me.

But life, religion, social needs, and church are for me as for millions much broader than they appear to be in Davis's definitions. Because of them, we put up with the muck, the crowding, the infighting, and the domineering of some captains on the ark. We are not thereby removed from the storm and the tossing, but we stand some chance of survival and service aboard, or at least clinging to some floating logs in sight of it.

Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza

'A HISTORY OF THE VICTIMS'

"THOSE WHO claim spiritual rule always say that it is for the good of ordinary people, who, it is understood, cannot be trusted if left to themselves." This concluding statement of Charles Davis accurately sums up the most recent developments within Roman Catholicism; the silencing of Callahan, the condemnation of Pohier, the suppression of Küng, not to mention the demeaning interrogation of Schillebeeckx and the attempted laicization of Hasler, have shocked not just the Catholic community. All these events publicly testify to the repressive character of a patriarchal hierarchy that idolizes itself as "church." In short, I agree with Professor Davis's diagnosis of the malaise but not with the prescribed remedy. To concede that the Christian church as a social entity is commensurate with the patriarchal hierarchy found in various denominations is to deny my own personal history and identity as a Catholic woman and to relinquish "my people," Christian women, and women's Christian heritage.

Since Davis's concept of the church as institution is somewhat ambiguous, it is hard to know exactly when he speaks of the church as an institution in the sense defined by Neuhaus or when he identifies the institutional church with the clerical office and with mainline tradition. Rather than analyze this ambiguity I would like to state that whenever I speak of the church as a social entity and institution I have in mind Christian women of the past and of the present. Such an understanding of church does not cover up the injustices done to women nor does it appeal to an ideal liberated community of the Spirit. Allegiance to women as an ecclesial-social entity becomes politically active in an ecumenical, truly catholic movement of women, distinctive but not separated from the so-called secular women's movement. Any struggle against the oppression of sexism waged for Roman Catholic, Episcopalian, or Mormon women benefits all women of our society and vice versa. Therefore one cannot leave the "church" without also abandoning the struggle against the sexist oppression of a patriarchal hierarchy. The definition of faith as "a permanent attitude of non-participation" does not suffice. Religious faith must also be lived in the involvement in a historical movement for liberation, in prophetic commitment, compassionate solidarity, consistent resistance, and grass-roots organization.

Women as church have a continuous history and can claim Jesus and the praxis of the early Christian movement as its roots and beginnings. Feminist theology has as its primary task to reclaim the cultural-religious heritage of Christian women, since the history of Christian women cannot only be understood as a history of oppression but also must be reconstituted as a history of liberation. The history of sexist oppression perpetuated by the clerical ruling classes must be seen for what it is. This history does not cancel out a "history from below," namely the history of the life, struggle, and leadership of Christian women. Again, such a reconstruction of the history of Christian women does not lessen but enhances the history of womankind.

In her commentary to the *Dinner Party* Judy Chicago gives the following raison d'être for her work:

> All the institutions of our culture tell us . . . that we are insignificant. But our heritage is our power; we can know ourselves and our capacities by seeing that other women have been strong. To reclaim our past and insist that it becomes a part of human history is the task that lies before us, for the future requires that women as well as men shape the world's destiny.

In a similar fashion Alex Haley tells the story of his people in *Roots* in order "to alleviate the legacies of the fact that preponderantly the histories have been written by the winners." In light of the importance that feminist and black artists and theologians ascribe to the reconstruction of their own history Davis's repeated

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assertion that blacks, the poor, or women have no meaningful history is jarring. He seems to identify history and historiography insofar as the victors write the history. But there is a history of the victims that is distinct from the historiography of the victors. It is this history that feminist and liberation theologians seek to reconstruct. By denying that the victims are also historical subjects with a continuous history, Davis implicitly acknowledges the claims and ideologies of the oppressive majority.

Davis's failure to distinguish between history and the writing of history has far-reaching consequences for his understanding of the traditions of those Christian churches that have become the historical losers and whose history has not found its way into the historical textbooks of the winners. A reconstruction of church history as the history of women would have to replace the orthodoxy-heresy model with a different pattern of meaning that would point out the patriarchal repression of women and at the same time get hold of the historical contribution, leadership, and struggle of Christian women. In such a reconstruction of Christian tradition the history of prophetic witness and protest would have a privileged place, since it is continuous with the prophetic movement in Israel and the counter-cultural, religion-critical early Christian movement initiated by Jesus.

Finally, commitment to the church of women and to their heritage is sustained by consistent resistance to all forms of structural-ecclesial oppression and political involvement in the struggle for liberation. The fifty women who faced the pope at his visit in Washington, standing silent and upright in their protest against ecclesial sexism, have become for me the symbol of the women's movement in the church. However, only when the women's movement is joined by all those in and outside Roman Catholicism who share the religious vision of the church as the People of God will we be able to build a strong grass-roots movement of prophetic witness against the repressive forces of a reactionary patriarchal hierarchy. Theologians have to decide to whom their loyalties belong.

Philip Murnion

'A CRITICAL JUNCTURE'

I FIND it difficult to discuss Charles Davis's positions in his own terms. For, in a piece that appears more polemical than logical, he defines his terms to suit his case. Thus religious faith is "the moment of non-participation that reaches transcendence" which makes his claim against any institutionalizing of religion self-evident. Human history is a matter of continuity among victors, which places the crucifixion outside the meaning of history. Those who maintain commitment to the church while acknowledging the defects of the church appear branded as having been "seduced into unconditional loyalty."

My frustration is that I think I agree with some of Davis's positions, viz., that sociologists are erroneous when they define religion so broadly as to include all ultimate meaning systems, whether or not these involve any element of transcendence; or that institutional forms of religion are inevitably inadequate to the reality they embody; or that the poor and powerless are given short-shrift by historiography (which includes ecclesiastical history that focuses on the clergy and church organizational structures). It may be more fruitful, therefore, to remark on some of the subjects of Davis's piece, rather than on his arguments, because I do feel that he falls into "naive institutionalism," however much he acknowledges this danger.

It appears to me that we are at a critical juncture in the history of religion and of the church and that these two realities are related but distinct, precisely because no institutional form of church fully cap-

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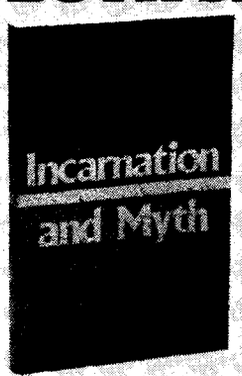

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tures the reality of religion. To begin with the church as an institution, which I could not do if I were to follow Davis (and my major reference is to the Catholic church), there is a struggle underway to clarify the identity of the church community, its teaching and structures, while allowing for varieties of viewpoint and ministry. An illustration from social ministry may be helpful. Among Catholics engaged in social action, such as public interest lobbying, community organizing, and international justice education, many work outside of ecclesiastical structures, but with a clear consciousness of their work as *ministry*. It has been the experience of the Catholic Committee on Urban Ministry (CCUM) that many of these people wish to associate themselves with church-based social ministry, with theological reflection, and with liturgy. CCUM has assembled this wide-ranging church and fostered such linkages.

At the same time, there is an effort in all of social ministry to integrate more clearly social action, theological reflection, and worship, so that more conscious faith may act as critique of both social structure and reform efforts, and that social action may more clearly be part of the forming of a value-committed people and not simply be the action of a temporary coalition based on shared self-interest. The challenge, then, is not whether there will be institutionalization—for this is unavoidable—but whether the church can reflect the fact that the mission and ministry of the church extends beyond the reach of ecclesiastical structures. Can we fashion the church so as both to support and to hold accountable to the Gospel all of social ministry without asserting control over all that claims to be social ministry? (Clearly, it is at least as appropriate to press social ministry to be accountable to Gospel norms as it is to promote the responsibility of corporations to social justice.)

One challenge we face, then, is that of broadening our view of where the church is acting while clarifying the religious foundations of social critique and action without asserting control over all action done in the name of the Gospel and of the church. In a short-hand way, we may say that the issue is an extension of the question posed by the relation of the Catholic Worker movement to the church.

So far, I have been talking about the activity of the church, though this has included reference to the explicitly religious foundations of church action. A similar challenge faces religion or "religious faith" as Davis calls it. It is a Catholic conviction that Christianity is inherently communal or corporate. It is a matter of a life and faith not merely shared but transmitted through human relationships and supported by these relationships. Furthermore, there is increasing evidence that, in a society that makes religious faith at least marginal, faith and commitment to a communal religious life (read "church") depends heavily on support from one's family and one's significant community. (To turn a phrase, the family that prays together, prays.) At the same time, we are aware that the articulation of faith in theology and its expression in worship take many forms and of the difference between theological inquiry and credal commitment. The challenges facing the church are: (a) how to achieve unity in faith necessary for any corporate or communal faith without allowing transcendence to mean no relationship to the social world—something that happens when we claim that faith is non-participation in the social struggle or when we adopt a kind of scripturism that ignores theological development; and (b) how to achieve unity in faith and worship while leaving room for the varieties of theological interpretation and liturgical expression.

In short, it appears to me that we face with unprecedented poignance the challenge of achieving a community in Christ that truly embraces the myriad forms of understanding and worship and the varieties of gifts of the Spirit, without letting the church be narrowed by organizational limitations and while acknowledging that the church as human is not exempt from the need for organizational supports. It is simply not very helpful to deny the institutional imperative that exists if the Christian community will resist the temptations to privatize religious faith or to make faith unrelated to the formation of a just human community.

Richard John Neuhaus

'HONORABLE BUT MISTAKEN'

I CONFESS to finding the choice of Charles Davis to review a book on the theory and practice of pastoral ministry somewhat curious. Surprising too is his bundle of excited reactions to a volume that "in its substantial content . . . does not say anything particularly new." While acknowledging the book's "balance, insight and good sense" and thinking it deserving of "laudatory notice," Davis believes the author is perpetrating a "sham," practicing "evasive dexterity," urging an "idolatrous commitment" to the religious institution, and doing distinctly unlaudatory things. But perhaps the book did have some therapeutic value for Mr. Davis as an emetic for disgorging the discontents that have been fermenting since "some thirty or so years ago."

Davis triumphantly quotes one passage which he believes "gives the game away." Fortunately, the passage does not say what he says it says. There and elsewhere the book argues that the truth of the church and its ministry cannot be legitimated or vindicated by appeals to the ethical quality of relations within the believing community. The truth claims of Christianity as summarized in, for instance, the Apostles' Creed will finally be vindicated only in the consummation of the promised Kingdom. It is primarily in the proclamation and sacramental celebration of that gospel hope, and not in the ethical superiority of Christians, that the necessity and integrity of the church is to be located.

The crux of Davis's excited reaction is in his concluding rejection of "a teaching

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and a history which are not and have never been ours." Davis would seem to be saying that, with respect to those truth claims and the myriad ways in which they are communally borne in history, he is, quite simply, not a Christian. It is a perfectly honorable, although I think mistaken, choice. Although one might desire greater clarity in their arguments, it is important to listen to those outside the believing community explain why they left and why we should leave too. I, not surprisingly, am among those who recognize more compelling reasons for being inside and urging others to join in the risks, joys, and tedium of commitment to the community. For better and for worse, we accept that teaching and history as ours.

Accepting means accepting responsibility. As I accept my personal history, my family, my being an American, so I accept responsibility for the Christian tradition—from Jerusalem to Rome, from Chalcedon to Wittenberg, from Augustine to Thomas Münzer, from Karl Rahner to Billy Graham. It is as morally mixed a bag as that of any significant communal tradition, although, in both good and evil, a great deal more impressive than others. Accepting responsibility means critically appropriating, assenting to the truth within it, publicly identifying with that history called Christianity. Mr. Davis's creed would seem to consist in "releasing all human beings, men and women, to become free subjects, acting together in responsible cooperation and mutual respect to create a worthy human existence," and so forth. It is a lovely, if somewhat hackneyed, sentiment and to the extent there is merit in it I believe its hope will be fulfilled in the present anticipation and final victory of the one whom the church calls Lord. It is for the sake of that hope, for the Gospel, that one participates in, protests, proclaims, criticizes, and celebrates the Christian community.

Davis's refusal to accept responsibility for sustaining within history the truth claims of Christianity seems to be only marginally related to his rather confused statements about history as such. He uses "history" in quite different ways—as actual lived experience, as event in the consciousness of the reflective subject, as written record. It would be helpful if he explained what he means by history. With respect to history as the record, is it really true that the poor have no history, that history is always the account of the conquerors? Is that true of the history of the Holocaust or of slavery in America? Surely Mr. Davis does not suggest that those events would be better understood from the perspective of the losers, namely, the leaders of the Third Reich and the slaveholders. I say "surely," giving him the benefit of the doubt, for it is not at all clear just what Mr. Davis is suggesting.

Responding to a Lutheran, Mr. Davis says, makes the discussion "more fundamental." In truth, his protests against religious authority are peculiarly and parochially Roman Catholic. There is no other part of the Christian community—not Methodists with their four-fold authority in scripture, tradition, reason, and experience, nor Lutherans who subscribe to scripture, councils, confessions, conscience, and reason, nor Eastern Orthodox with their understanding of decentralized teaching authority in the office of the bishop—that poses the problems to which Mr. Davis is reacting. All communities have their problems with authority, but Mr. Davis's problem with

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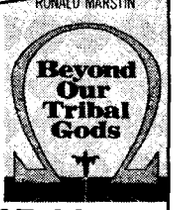

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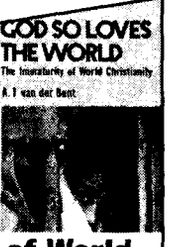

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the authority of the religious institution as such is singularly Roman Catholic. Of course, because Roman Catholicism is a large part of the community to which we all belong, it is also our problem. But it is regrettable that Mr. Davis extrapolates from his unhappy denominational experience in order to propose a general theory of religious authority.

In addition, there is an element of false consciousness, if you will, in Mr. Davis's assumption that he is liberated from the tradition he wants to abandon. The very metaphors of liberation, community, diaspora, and such, which he employs, emerge from the biblical tradition and the institutions that have, however inadequately, sustained it. The kind of private, existential religion of surprise and non-participation that Davis affirms poses no threats to the unjust orders of the world and has no resources to bring those orders under judgment. As has been frequently noted, the Stalins and Hitlers of history do not attack religious belief so much as they attack and restrict the institutions of religion. It is in and through these institutions, created and maintained by believing people, that an alternative to oppression can be posited, that another truth can be proclaimed, that a transcendent referent for moral judgment can be invoked. Would Judaism be stronger, or even have survived, without synagogue and rabbinate? Would black liberation be advanced by the disappearance of the black church?

Finally, Davis's argument is touchingly naive in its yearning for a "pure religion" untainted by the ambiguities and compromises of history. Whatever else it is—and many of us believe Christian religion is the bearer of the ultimate truth—religion is an emphatically human enterprise. Of course the truth is compromised, even falsified, by any institution. This is true even of the most elementary institution of language itself. Therein is the truth of the ancient and contemporary Eastern Orthodox emphasis upon the "apophatic" and the Western church's appreciation of the *via negativa*. Only in silence can the purity of The Truth be maintained. But we must speak, as we must act, as we must associate with others. In doing so we lose our purity; in its place, by the grace of God, we have forgiveness, faithfulness, and hope. Mr. Davis's argument invites one to join him as a victim of the naiveté that embraces an illusory ideal of pure religion and then be victimized again by the naiveté that cannot endure the illusion's destruction. At one level, this bifurcation of religion from historical (read institutional) reality is but a sophisticated version of the notion that "religion and politics (or economics, or whatever) don't mix." At another, it is but a modern socio-politicized rerun of the ancient gnostic heresy that would seek salvation through "non-participation" in the dreadfully compromised history of an itching, sweating, smelling, and endlessly quarrelsome sacramental community of faith.

Charles Davis has decided to remain outside. I hope he will reconsider, but that is of course his decision to make. No doubt in his encounter with the church institution he has been hurt and scandalized. One must try to be sympathetic. Remaining outside can be heroic. To judge from his present statement, it is in Charles Davis's case more an instance of confusion. Perhaps the confusion is a consequence of the collapse of a prior credulity with respect to the church and its institutions. But one would have to know more about Mr. Davis to have an informed opinion on that. In any case, to the extent that Mr. Davis has clarified the implications of an alternative commitment, I find myself reaffirmed in my "critical affirmation of the church and its mission."

Screen

HARD ACT TO FOLLOW

KLAUS KINSKI: UP FOR THE COUNT

I HAVE JUST RETURNED from the voting meeting of the National Society of Film Critics, where *Breaking Away* won the award for Best Film of the Year. Ridiculous. It's a likable little movie, but the whole idea of giving it an award is silly. Dustin Hoffman won Best Actor for his performances in both *Kramer vs. Kramer* and *Agatha*. Hoffman is a Method actor with intensity and considerable discipline, but there is something fundamentally wrong when he sweeps to victory in the voting while Klaus Kinski receives only a few, scattered nominations for his performance in Werner Herzog's *Nosferatu*. Though *Nosferatu* is not Herzog's best work, there is even something wrong in its having been out of the running for Best Film. *Breaking Away* no doubt *is* the best work of which its director, Peter Yates, is capable. This is precisely why it deserves no awards. That a film by a hack who happens to have hit his stride should carry off top honors, while a flawed masterpiece isn't even in consideration, is, again, ridiculous.

On those rare occasions when the title *Nosferatu* did come up in the reading of the tallies, one or two critics who clearly hadn't voted for it would say, "Oh, yes . . . *Nosferatu*," as if the dimness of their memories were tinged with regret. But it was obvious that a number of critics writing for prominent national magazines hadn't seen *Nosferatu* at all. They must have figured there wasn't much point in dealing with this relatively obscure film, and the voting showed that they were right. The awards were a popularity contest, not a recognition of merit. I keep saying that there's something wrong in all this. What's wrong is that either I'm crazy, or my colleagues at the National Society are. A good deal of banter goes on during the voting (the banter, rather than the votes, is what makes the meetings worthwhile), and at one point Pauline Kael accused Jonathan Baumbach from *Partisan Review* of having "eccentric" tastes. When Jonathan said that he also found her enthusiasms hard to understand, she replied a little smugly, "Well, that's what we all have our columns for." Even though Pauline doesn't have her old *New Yorker* columnn these days, that was the only opinion I agreed with all afternoon.

So let me leave the National Society behind for another year

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and take refuge in the opportunity my column offers to continue my discussion of Woyzeck and Count Dracula. (A man should be known by the company he keeps.) I can't imagine a character that would be harder to play with originality then Dracula. After Bram Stoker's novel and over half a century of vampire movies, Dracula isn't a character at all anymore. He's a set of conventions that have replaced the character they were meant to represent. He's like a phrase that has become a cliché and lost all its literal meaning in the process. Inside the conventions, the role of Dracula has crumbled away to dust. Nonetheless, Klaus Kinski has brought the role back to life. He has truly breathed a kind of human life, or a grotesque but recognizable perversion of life, into the role. Thus has he managed to do something original and affecting where one would have thought it impossible.

Kinski's *tour de force* is to play the role of Dracula with an undertone of loathing and disgust. He turns the tables on earlier interpretations, where the mortal characters shrink from contact with the vampire, and has Dracula shrinking from his contact with the mortals instead. Kinski's response to humanity goes beyond shrinking. It is almost a cringe of revulsion at times. His dependence on men notwithstanding, it is clear that Dracula can scarcely bear their society. When he's around people his upper lip often rises with an involuntary quiver, as if it were his feet he were lifting in order to avoid stepping in something nasty. Clasped over one another like folded wings, his hands follow the posture of his lip, rising with disdain as if to place themselves out of reach. The more deferential the ovations from men are, the more they revolt the Count. His displeasure is most apparent when the bewitched and devoted Renfield (Roland Topor) volunteers for service.

By behaving in this way, Kinski makes Dracula into a pathetic figure rather than a horrific one. All Draculas have done lip service to the idea that Dracula is tired of living. But Kinski's revulsion at mortal beings makes us believe it. We take this revulsion to be, partly, a self-revulsion. We see that the one way in which Dracula himself is not human, his inability to die, is his tragedy. His immortality doesn't liberate him from the human condition. It traps him in it.

Kinski's acting career began during World War II when he pretended madness in order to get himself out of a P.O.W. camp. Since then he has done, besides legitimate theater, over 150 movies, many of them strictly commercial films in which he had small roles. If you're a spaghetti Western fan, for instance, you may recall the hunchback gunman who goes up against Clint Eastwood in Sergio Leone's *For a Few Dollars More* (1965). That was Kinski, who manages to pack more terror and brutality into a vignette than Leone and Eastwood can pack into the rest of the film. But the performance that has made Kinski truly memorable as a film actor is the one he would most like to forget: the title role in Herzog's *Aguirre, the Wrath of God*.

As I was explaining a couple of issues ago, during the shooting of *Aguirre* Kinski and Herzog come near shooting each other. Yet Kinski's performance as Aguirre is inspired. Even as he and a detachment from Pizarro's expedition of 1560 are trying to escape from the Amazon jungle with their lives, Aguirre still believes that really he is in the process of founding an empire. Kinski plays this megalomaniac as if he were a damaged monument, a great, craggy visage listing dangerously in the rain forest, ready to topple over at any moment. There is in his portrayal an insight into an impossible role comparable to the one he has playing Dracula. In fact, the roles themselves are comparable. Each requires an expressionless exterior through which torment and passion somehow show. The moral character comes out in behavior that is like an extrusion on rock. It makes us realize that below the surface there is some terrible pressure capable of having forced this tiny eruption through an impermeable substance.

I'm unsure why *Nosferatu* is not as great a success for Herzog as it is for Kinski. I think it has to do with *Nosferatu*'s being for Herzog a more self-conscious piece of work. In it he is thinking always on two levels, in *doubles entendres*, as at the end when he has Jonathan Harker (Bruno Ganz) turn into a vampire while Dracula is dying. The implication of mortal generations and renewal here is a contribution to the Dracula myth itself, but also an allusion in Herzog's debt to F. W. Murnau, whose 1922 version of *Nosferatu* was the inspiration for Herzog's own film. Herzog's purpose is to pay homage to Murnau, but I think he is inhibited in certain ways by Murnau's presence. Herzog is better—wilder, freer—when he is working with raw material like the priest's journal on which *Aguirre* is based. When he is working from an established masterpiece, like Murnau's *Nosferatu*, it restricts him.

Perhaps the same problem arose for Herzog with *Woyzeck*, which is his adaptation of Georg Büchner's dramatic fragment written in 1836. Unfortunately, whatever the difficulty was here, it was Kinski's as well. *Aguirre* and *Nosferatu* suggest that Kinski's genius is for playing roles contrary to his own experience, characters of myth who are historically and psychologically distant. The title role in Woyzeck may have been too close for him to lunge at it from afar the way he could with Aguirre and Dracula. The life led by Büchner's title character, a soldier garrisoned in a town that's a virtual asylum, may have been too like Kinski's own traumas as a P.O.W. He seems to have been paralyzed rather than animated by the role. Remember that Kinski once turned down a chance to do Woyzeck on the stage because the role filled him with such immediate, personal dread.

Woyzeck is a character whose despair is right up on the surface. He is frenetic, a man whose fate drives him through life willy-nilly. There is no place in this role for the tension between external and internal nature that characterizes Aguirre and Dracula. Nor is there any tension still in the relationship between Kinski and Herzog, and maybe that is in some ways unfortunate, too. Maybe tension is what Herzog's direction of Kinski ultimately depends upon for success. As I said in the first column I devoted to these two men, the strangest aspect of their relationship, which is always bizarre, even at its most normal, is that they seem to do their best work only when they are ready to kill one another.

COLIN L. WESTERBECK, JR.

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Books: TWO VISIONS OF MORAL THEOLOGY

FREE AND FAITHFUL IN CHRIST: VOLUME 1: GENERAL MORAL THEOLOGY

Bernard Häring

Seabury Press, $17.50, 492 pp.

PRINCIPLES FOR A CATHOLIC MORALITY

Timothy E. O'Connell

Seabury Press $11.95, 233 pp.

Merle Longwood

SINCE Vatican II there has been a flood of articles delineating the renewal of Catholic moral theology, and an even greater number of articles and books focusing on particular moral issues, but there have been few books which have attempted to present systematically the basic principles of moral theology in the light of these recent developments. Consequently, these two substantial books in general moral theology fill a need for sustained, comprehensive, internally consistent works that express the current thinking being done in this discipline.

Häring's book, published twenty-five years after his landmark work, *The Law of Christ*, is the first volume of what will again be a three-volume presentation of the whole of Catholic moral theology. Häring promises that this new comprehensive moral theology will not be an abridged or revised edition of the previous work nor a repudiation of it, but a further development of it in the light of the changes that have occurred in the past quarter of a century.

Häring suggests that his involvement with the Second Vatican Council, as well as the contact he has had with Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the United States, has made him aware that his previous writings were too narrowly European. He indicates that he is now more sensitive to the interests of the Third World, even though his experience has been predominantly in Europe and North America. A careful examination of the sources cited in the footnotes of this new volume shows significantly more authors from the English-speaking world than were evident in the earlier three-volume work, but the references to writers representing the Third World are still few.

Häring's book is divided into eight chapters plus a concluding synthesis. The first four chapters elaborate general themes that are familiar from Häring's previous writings, beginning with a discussion of the biblical perspective, tracing this through the history of moral theology, and then delineating the themes of freedom and fidelity. The fifth and sixth chapters focus on "the fundamental option" and "conscience." The next two chapters describe a variety of issues related to normative ethics and sin, respectively, and the concluding synthesis tries to pull everything together.

From my perspective, the chapter on the fundamental option summarized some of the most interesting developments in moral theology that have occurred in recent years, and Häring discusses this concept by drawing upon philosophers and psychologists, in addition to classic and contemporary theologians. This analysis is extended further in relation to the insights of Lawrence Kohlberg, Rollo May, and others in the following chapter on conscience.

The greatest disappointment in this book is the way Häring handles arguments in which there are significant issues at stake. He frequently seems content to summarize the present state of the discussion in general terms, neither delineating the nuances or subtleties of the debate nor firmly adjudicating between them. For example, he concludes his discussion of the differences between deontological and teleological criteria for norms with the general suggestion that "as Christians, we should give our greatest attention to forming a harmonious synthesis of deontological and teleological reflections."

> *A mature Christian conscience will not think of faith as a catalogue of things and formulations. What shapes all the moral dispositions, gives wholeness to the conscience and firmness to the Christian's fundamental option is the profound attitude of faith and its responsiveness. Faith, as a profound relationship with Christ, awakens in us a deep longing to know Christ and all that he has taught us and expects from us.* —Bernard Häring
> *Free and Faithful in Christ*

In *Principles for a Catholic Morality*, Timothy E. O'Connell covers a lot of the same ground as Häring, but the tone and emphases of O'Connell's work clearly distinguish it from Häring's. Even a cursory examination of the amount of attention each author gives to natural law and the Bible will reveal the differences. Whereas Häring devotes only a small part of one chapter to a discussion of natural law, O'Connell devotes a whole section of his book—eight out of the twenty chapters—to a discussion of natural law morality. Moreover, Häring begins his book with an extensive treatment of the biblical perspective on morality and references to scripture permeate his work, while O'Connell confines his explicit discussion of biblical morality to a relatively brief chapter and scarcely refers to the Bible following that. Indeed in the chapter immediately following his discussion of the Bible, O'Connell develops a theological justification for discussing Christian morality primarily in philosophical and phenomenological terms with relatively little attention given to the content of the Christian faith, to say nothing about the Bible.

This argument, which is central to O'Connell's work, is further developed in one of the concluding essays of the book, focusing on "'Christian' Morality." In this essay, O'Connell denies there is a distinctive Christian ethic in terms of its content or source. In relation to those aspects, "Christian ethics is human ethics, no less and certainly no

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more." However, he does allow a specifically Christian ethic in relation to "meaning" and "motivation." This is best summarized in a concluding statement made after summarizing the discussions of James Gustafson and others on this question: "We have been articulating a vision which recognizes the interpenetration of the divine and the human in the lives we lead, and which reflects that interpenetration. On the basis of that vision we have tried to understand the principles of a morality which is human in its content and its source, but also a morality which is Christian in its essential meaning-conviction and its existential motivation."

In terms of tone, Häring's book frequently verges on homiletical exhortation, whereas O'Connell's book is consistently precise, clear, and deliberative in its arguments. A reader of this book by O'Connell will not be surprised to learn that one of the author's previous achievements was a study of Josef Fuchs's writings, for it seems to be from such a philosophical and phenomenological perspective that O'Connell has discerned the basic shape of contemporary moral theology. In writing *Principles for a Catholic Morality*, O'Connell's aim was to develop a popular textbook in fundamental moral theology, and in doing so from the perspective he did he has perhaps not broken as decisively as Häring has with the manualist tradition of moral theology, which provided the basis for most of the popular textbooks used in moral theology courses in Catholic colleges and seminaries before Vatican II.

Readers will disagree on the question of which of these two works most satisfactorily represents the current state of the development of the discipline, but college students, seminarians, pastors, and interested lay persons will profit by reading either or both.

Moral education, moral mechanics

THE TASTE FOR THE OTHER

Gilbert Meilaender

Eerdmans, $6.95, paper, 245 pp.

COMPARATIVE RELIGIOUS ETHICS

David Little and Sumner B. Twiss

Harper & Row, $10.95, 266 pp.

Roderick Hindery

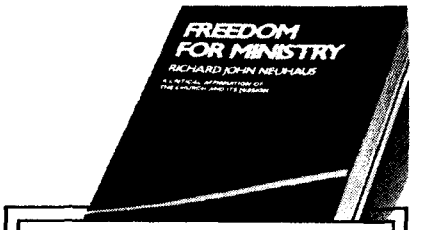
The Taste for the Other could actually serve as a title for both of these books. Each concerns itself with ethics, how persons relate to each other or the Other (God). However, the approach that each author takes differs significantly.

Gilbert Meilaender analyzes the social and ethical thought of C. S. Lewis. Lewis sees persons caught up in the affirming-negating dialectic of life's "Great Dance." He acknowledges human freedom, but humanity is more than freedom, for persons are sinful and in need of assuming the creaturely posture of receptivity before their Creator. They must obey the Tao ("the concrete reality in which to participate is to be truly human,") which contains the fundamental truths about human nature. However, here where religion and morality meet, God is to be loved as the Good not as the Commander.

In building relationships with each other, people attempt to image divine self-giving love. The resultant community, necessarily diverse and hierarchical in structure, created by human love (i.e., need-love and gift-love) is transformed by sharing in the divine gift-love of God Himself. "He who loses his life will save it," as Lewis is fond of quoting.

Human love, when expressed as eros, personalizes the sexual appetite. Marriage, moreover, makes eros faithful. Other human relationships, an "inner ring" or exclusive group, can either foster or inhibit true love in community. Even animals, Lewis maintains, share in the life of the human community and are in need of liberation.

On the other hand, community can be threatened. Pride, the great sin of existing for oneself (not others), leads one to hell, the ultimate retreat into the self and



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Christian Witness to Muslims: Issues for Mission Today. Dr. David Kerr, Director, Center for Christian Muslim Relations, Selly Oak College, Birmingham, England; and Dr. S.H. Nasr, former Chancellor, Aryamehr University, Tehran, and President, Iranian Academy of Philosophy.

APRIL 14-18
Cultural Problems in Mission: Anthropology Where it Matters. Dr. Louis J. Luzbetak, S.V.D., Editor, ANTHROPOS International Journal.

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Announcing the Kingdom: Latin American Perspectives on Evangelization. Dr. Mortimer Arias, Exec. Sec., Latin American Methodist Council of Churches.

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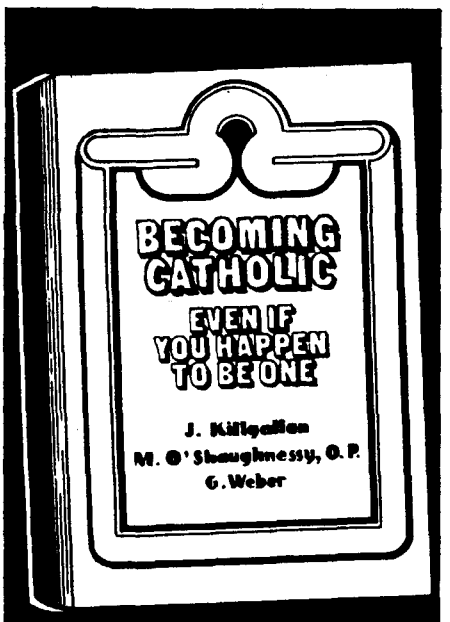

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the denial of community. Even if one escapes hell, one may need to voluntarily be cleansed in purgatory, an integral and curative part of the sanctification process, before entering into eternal community with God.

As for morality ("men transmitting manhood to men") Lewis contends that moral knowledge is objective and can be known. He reveals a normative ethic of character, flexible and non-utilitarian, Aristotelian in structure. As his strongest and most enduring ethical theme, Lewis proposes moral education, the development of appropriate emotional responses through exposure to virtuous/exemplar persons in the human community.

Meilaender has provided the reader with a smoothly reworked dissertation, presenting a balanced assessment of Lewis's social and ethical views, faulting him for his frequent obscurities, inadequacies, and oversights while praising him as a creative apologist and explicator of the Christian tradition.

While Meilaender has concerned himself with Lewis's own preoccupation with moral education rather than with the epistemological problem behind moral knowledge, in *Comparative Religious Ethics* David Little and Sumner Twiss have focused on the latter question especially. Turning to the mechanics of morality, as it were, the authors explain their reconstructed definitions of the terms "morality," "law," and "religion." Subsequently these notions are translated into moral, legal, and religious action guides. Through diagrams, the writers attempt to show their interdependence. Finally, they present and schematize practical justification ("an activity that involves the giving of authorizing reasons for the performance of an action" p. 96) as part of their new method of doing comparative religious ethics.

Within the second half of the volume, Little and Twiss single out three particular religious traditions (Navajo, Christianity—as concretized in the Gospel by Matthew—and Theravada Buddhism) in order to test out the applicability of the categories which they devised in the first half of the book.

In a short concluding segment, the authors explain why the study was confined to definitions and method; their rationale for choosing the three paradigmatic traditions; and their concern to avoid imposing pre-defined categories on existing traditions. Students of comparative religious ethics will be encouraged by their remarks about further cross-cultural studies of rational processes.

Advanced undergraduates, graduate students, and college teachers will most likely be able to handle the authors' logical and meticulous preoccupation with the redefinition of terminology. Those unacquainted with analytical philosophy may have difficulty. Likewise, those who prefer a more holistic approach such as uncovering a particular ethos or complex of factors responsible for energizing moral behavior in a given religious tradition may be uncomfortable with an apparently cold, analytical philosophical technique which may succeed in partly clarifying the language while underemphasizing the substance of a religious heritage. Moreover, some may be uneasy with the authors' use of contemporary Western analytical tools rather than making an effort to bring to the surface the inherent instruments which may lie within the traditions themselves. Also, there may be those who question the choice of Theravada Buddhism over Mahayana Buddhism for the latter concerns a far greater number of people than the former. I, for one, would have preferred more development or clarification of such concepts as: the distinction between custom and law; the difference between validation and vindication; motivation, and role models.

In identifying the task of morality as finding a solution to the problem of human cooperation, Little and Twiss

> *There is no way to save one's humanity except by giving it in love to God and one's fellows. To claim independence is to make war on the great reality principle of the universe. Yet, to accept that reality may mean the death of the worlds we have constructed to keep ourselves secure.*
>
> —Gilbert Meilaender
> *The Taste for the Other*

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focus on "other-regardingness" as the prism through which religious traditions refract their particular ethics. It is when this "other-regardingness"/"taste for the other" is accentuated in human fellowship that the true community of persons, delineated by Lewis and assumed by Little and Twiss, is realized.

We are all pagans becoming Christians

BEYOND OUR TRIBAL GODS: THE MATURING OF FAITH

Ronald Marstin

Orbis, $5.95 paper, 150 pp.

Eugene Hillman

WHEN RONALD MARSTIN was a doctoral candidate at Harvard I heard him lecture eloquently on the themes contained in this book, a popularization of his dissertation on the way faith matures, or should mature, in the lives of Christians. He convinced me then that Christianity has been badly used, as though it were a tribal religion, in the service of those who are advantaged by the present world order through which the rich are further enriched while the poor are reduced to destitution, starvation, and death.

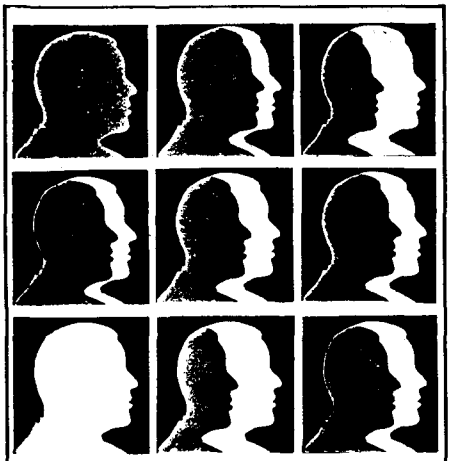
As a missionary in Africa I learned something about faith in a tribal god. It can unify, sustain and comfort a whole people. But it can also turn a community inward upon itself. It tends to define humanity in terms of the insiders and the outsiders, the chosen and the others, those who matter and those who do not. This makes it possible for the favored ones to tolerate, and even legitimate, all kinds of injustices suffered by the others.

It is not only in Africa that tribal gods are honored, sometimes even under a Christian label. This happens conspicuously when military chaplains bless machines of death while bishops mouth pagan slogans to encourage the troops. But the more common forms of this idolatry in America are less dramatic: e.g., when a suburban pastor tacitly approves a plan to keep the neighborhood white; or when a Catholic school accepts only token blacks, if any at all. "In a world dotted with islands of the privileged in a sea of refugees and outcasts," says Marstin, "there are as many faiths as there are peoples: faiths to fortify the strong and pacify the weak; faiths to justify, for insiders and outsiders alike, the barriers that keep them apart."

Against these local deities Christian monotheism is threatening. The God of biblical revelation is a universalist who loves the outsiders no less than he loves those who think they are on the inside; nor does he respect any neat boundaries of race, color, class, education, wealth, rank, or whatever. Jesus comes explicitly for the sake of those who are despised as sinners, beggars, prisoners, orphans, etc. His Gospel is a surprise to both the rich and the poor; it is a scandal to some and good news to others, as it puts down the mighty and exalts the lowly. Christianity is revolutionary. This is why, in the name of various local gods, high priests sometimes become assassins, prophets are stoned and heretics burned.

How is it possible for pious Christians to fall into such idolatrous behavior? It is not really a matter of falling into it, but of coming out of it. We are first socialized into the local culture religion of our own tribe or people or nation or class; then we spend a lifetime becoming Christians through a process of maturing in faith. As our vision and our concerns broaden, we begin to resemble the followers of a universal God whose love embraces every tribe and tongue and people and nation and class and color and rank.

Called to this witness, we are expected to go out from the secure valley in which our personal selves have been nurtured and identified with our own community of origin; go out to the lands beyond where we will find the rest of God's people and our true home among the nations. "A universalist faith," in Marstin's words, "matures only as the faithful come credibly to identify with the peoples of the whole world." Then, of course, we also become vulnerable, as Jesus was, to the defensive aggression of those among our own people who feel



SOMEONE, NO ONE

AN ESSAY ON INDIVIDUALITY

Kenelm Burridge

As categories of moral action, the individual and individuality lie at the center of Western civilization. Kenelm Burridge asks if this reflects the development of a universal in human experience, or if in some sense it is tied to a specific cultural tradition. In seeking these roots, using ethnographic information, he traces the origins to the impact in the Roman hegemony of the events of the New Testament and early Christianity which, he contends, provided humankind with a vehicle for the fusing of individual will and a higher morality.

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threatened by the revolutionary implications of such a witness.

In our hopeful safari outward we are all pagans trying to become Christians. So our obtuseness need not be attributed to a special wickedness in the hearts of the advantaged; it is rather due to the limited vision we have because of our historical location in the socio-economic hierarchy, or our particular place on the pyramid of power, or our vested interest in the *status quo*. What we see, hence what we are able and willing to do, is largely determined by where we stand and by the company we keep. Whose interests do we consult when we make our decisions? "Different perspectives," as Marstin says, "yield quite different imperatives."

The *Inquisitores Generales* of the Holy Office (now the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith) were not malicious, just blind, when they taught officially in 1866 that Christians may continue to engage in the African slave trade, provided only that they refrain from dealing in slaves who have been stolen from their rightful owners, because "it is wrong to buy property taken by theft." This is why Yves Congar could ask rhetorically whether theologians, with a few rare exceptions, have ever done anything but rationalize the *status quo*. As Marstin explains it: "Theology done by the privileged responds to the questions they are near enough to hear and feel."

With uncommon clarity and the vigor of a prophet, Marstin compels us to face the global implications of our Christian faith. This is liberation theology speaking directly to the advantaged. Every page is a fresh question raised against the cozy arrangements which sustain and comfort us while ignoring the plight of the vast majority who are beyond the pale. What it all comes down to finally is the meaning of Christian holiness: whether we see it as an interior journey concerned with a spiritualized poverty appropriate to the needs of the affluent minority; or as a pilgrimage together with the poor majority out in the real world.

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REVIEWERS

MERLE LONGWOOD *is associate professor of religious studies at Siena College in Loudonville, New York.*

RODERICK HINDERY *teaches in the religion department at Temple University. He is the author of* Comparative Ethics in Hindu and Buddhist Traditions.

FATHER EUGENE HILLMAN, *C.S.Sp., is a research associate at the University of Nairobi. His recently completed study of mission work among African nomads will be published by Orbis Books.*

JOHN DEEDY, *former managing editor of* Commonweal, *is a free-lance writer living in Massachusetts.*

In brief

OUR LIFE IN GOD'S LIGHT, *Essays by Hugh T. Kerr; edited by John M. Mulder; Westminster, 352 pp.; $12.50 cloth, $7.95 paperback.*

When *Theology Today* was launched in 1944, it was designed to be a literary journal for the illumination of new ideas in religion and theology. Not everyone was sanguine about its future. In 1944 Americans had a war on their minds. Paper was in desperately short supply. And the concept of a non-technical theological quarterly just didn't connect with the working proposition about what a theological journal could or should be.

Well, the doubters have long since faded into the New Jersey sunsets. For 35 years, from the precincts of Princeton Theological Seminary, *Theology Today* has charted with distinction the major movements in the churches and in theology, from neo-orthodoxy to Vatican II to the theologies of revolution, hope and liberation. Today *Theology Today* is the most widely circulated (8,000) and, some would say, most influential quarterly of theological thought in the United States. Certainly it is intelligent, open and readable.

Much of the credit for this goes to Hugh T. Kerr, the Presbyterian theologian whose "Theological Table-Talk" and other writings have appeared in *Theology Today* from its inception. This is a collection of 35 Kerr pieces, and a graceful assembly it is of a writer's efforts to present to a fractured world a literate and coherent presentation of the Gospels. The viewpoints are progressive, ecumenical and remarkably catholic. Ecosystems, language, movies, the treasures of Tutankhamun—Kerr is as much at home with these subjects as he is with Niebuhr, Tillich, Bultmann—and Aquinas.

Anthologies do not always make for satisfactory books, but *Our Life in God's Light* is a happy exception.

JOHN DEEDY

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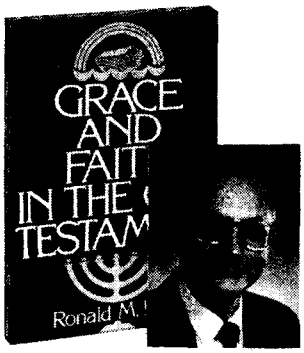

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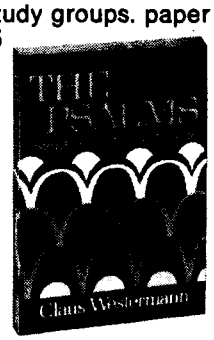

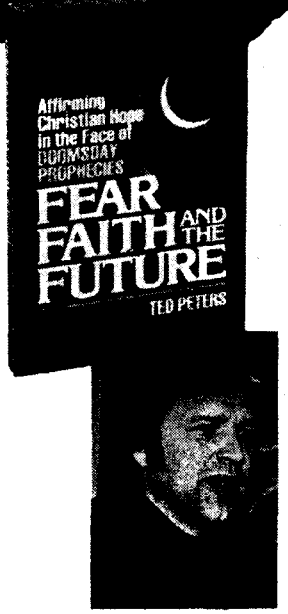

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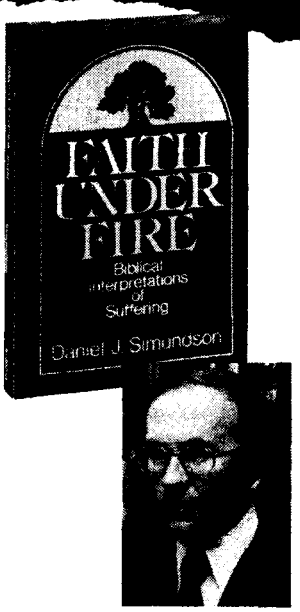

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